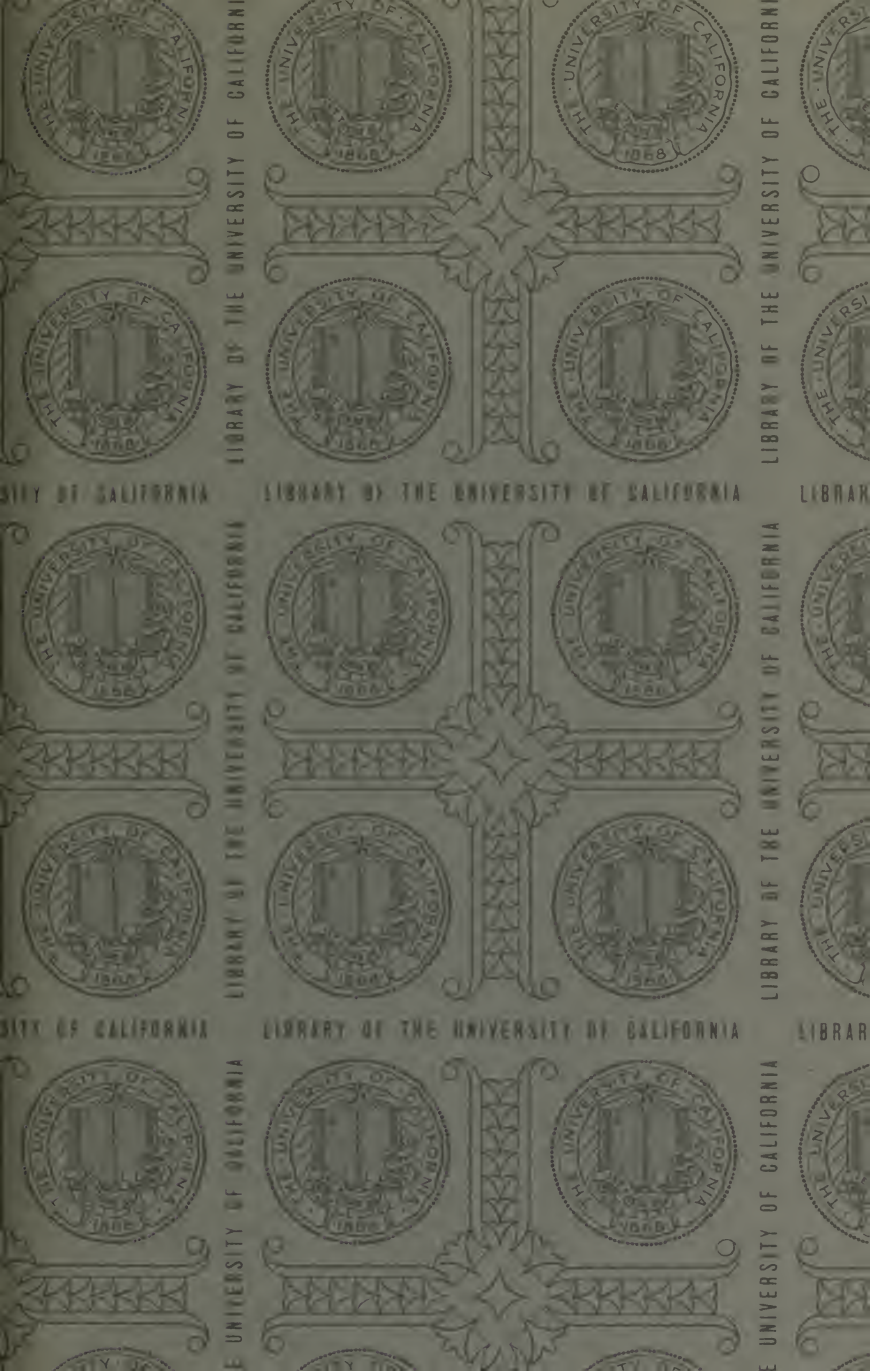








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The Bulletin, Sydney
The Bulletin Story Book

A SELECTION OF
STORIES AND LITERARY SKETCHES
FROM "THE BULLETIN"

[1881—1901]



THE
BULLETIN
STORY BOOK

SYDNEY: MCM
THE BULLETIN NEWSPAPER COMPANY, LIMITED
PUBLISHERS

Prefatory

THE files of *The Bulletin* for twenty years offer so much material for a book such as this, that it was not possible to include more than a small number of the stories and literary sketches judged worthy of republication. Consequently many excellent Australasian writers are here unrepresented, their work being perforce held over for *The Second Bulletin Story Book*, although it is work of a quality equal to that which is now given.

The risk and expense of this publication are undertaken by The Bulletin Newspaper Company, Limited. Should any profits accrue, a share of forty per cent. will be credited to the writers represented.

Owing to the length of time which, in some cases, has elapsed since the original publication in *The Bulletin*, the names and addresses of some of the writers have been lost sight of; and their work appears over pen-names. The editor will be glad if these writers will communicate with him and assist in completing the Biographical Index at the end of the book. Any suggestions for revision or improvement of the stories or of the book will be gratefully received.

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Office of THE BULLETIN,
214 George Street, Sydney, Australia,
1st December, 1901.

THE BULLETIN
AUSTRALIAN

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Introductory

IN collating these stories and literary sketches from the files of *The Bulletin*, the aim has been to make an interesting book. It has not been attempted to choose the best examples of literary style. Judged by a high canon, our most talented story-writers are still only clever students of the art of writing. A mere two or three have been able to earn a living by the profession of literature, and even these have been obliged to make the perilous compromise with journalism. So the stories and sketches which follow are usually the literary dreams of men of action, or the literary realisation of things seen by wanderers. Usually they are objective, episodic, detached—branches torn from the Tree of Life, trimmed and dressed with whatever skill the writers possess (which often is not inconsiderable). In most of them still throbs the keen vitality of the parent stem: many are absolute transcripts of the Fact, copied as faithfully as the resources of language will permit. Hence many of them, remaining level with Nature, remain on the lower plane of Art—which at its highest is not imitative, but creative,—making anew the whole world in terms of its subject. What is desiderated is that these isolated impressions should be fused in consciousness, and re-visualised, re-presented with their universal reference made clear—yes! with the despised Moral, but with a moral which shines forth as an essence, is not stated as an after-thought. In other words, the branch should be shown growing upon the Tree, not severed from it: the Part should imply the Whole, and in a sense contain it, defying mathematics. Every story of a man or woman should be a microcosm of humanity; every vision of Nature should hold an imagination of the Universe. These be counsels of perfection which it is easier to teach than to practise, though many writers in other lands have practised them. So we take the good the gods provide, and are properly grateful, while striving for better and best.

Further, in this book it has not been attempted to choose examples of work characteristically Australian. The literary work which is Australian in spirit, as well as in scene or incident, is only beginning to be written. The formal establishment of the Commonwealth has not yet crystallised the floating elements of national life. Australia is still a suburb of Cosmopolis, where

men from many lands perpetuate in a new environment the ideas and habits acquired far away. Our children bow instinctively to the fetishes of their fathers, for the heredity of centuries is not eliminated in a generation, or in half-a-dozen generations. Only here and there we receive hints and portents of the Future. Australian Nationality to-day is like an alchemist's crucible just before the gold-birth, with red fumes rising, and strange odours, and a dazzling gleam caught by moments through the bubble and seethe. Yet, without a deliberate choice, a few examples of Australian work—of work which could not have been conceived or written anywhere but in Australia—have naturally included themselves in the following pages. These are often sad or tragic : because, first, the fierce intensity of Tragedy makes more poignant, profounder literature than Comedy can make ; because, second, our pioneering stage of civilisation is necessarily a stage of hard struggle, often of individual defeat, and the shadow of Tragedy lowers heavily over men who are fighting in a doubtful battle. Yet there are not wanting adumbrations of the Beauty of Australia,—glimpses of the secret enchantment in which this strange, feline land—half-fierce, half-caressing—holds those who have listened to the gum-trees' whispered spells or drunk the magic philter of landscapes flooded with Nature's opiate-tints.

Verlaine's cult of Faded Things, extolling the hinted hue before the gross colour, finds a natural home in Australia,—in many aspects a Land of Faded Things—of delicate purples, delicious greys, and dull, dreamy olives and ochres. Yet we have been content to let strangers foist upon us the English ideals of glaring green or staring red and orange ; we have permitted them to denounce our grave harmonies of rock and vegetation, with shadow laid on tender shadow, light on dusky light. This, though the chief English art-magazine passes by all the English emeralds and flaunting autumn tints to bind itself in dull Australian green ! This, though intelligent Englishmen themselves revolt against their tradition of crude colouring, and declare, like returning Morley Roberts, that " there was one thing that struck me in England as very strange, not to say painful, and that was the vivid colour of the pastures. We are quite proud of our perpetual verdure ; but, to tell the truth, the tint of the grass after the soberer dull greys and greens and browns of Australia was extremely unpleasant to my eye. I thought the colour glaring, not to say inartistic ; it certainly was not unnatural, and yet it struck me as being as nearly that as if someone had deliberately painted the fields. It took me months to get reconciled to it."

And the typical English beauty often looks as painted as the fields, with her coarse contrast of carmine and white ; yet we permit Englishmen to come here and decry the divine pallor of Australians ruddied like a capricious coral !

Englishmen have been permitted even to denounce the gum-tree, the most picturesque tree that grows, always at ease and unconventional. To see the many-bosomed gum-tree moving in a breeze (that gum-tree shaped like a soaring parachute made of a score of minor parachutes which lift and strain as if eager to be off and up); to watch the shifting interspaces of sky when amber days or purple nights play hide-and-seek among the wayward branches, and to listen to the birdlike murmur of the leaves, almost a twittering;—this is to receive an æsthetic education. Yet Englishmen persist in bringing hither their dense, sombre trees which defy even an Australian sun-ray, which almost disdain to ruffle in an Australian breeze—trees with the heavy magnificence of an English dinner, and often as dull;—and they call upon us to admire these unnatural exotics! Englishman Marcus Clarke has even called our gum-tree “melancholy,” our forests “funereal.” He knew nothing of this country beyond Victoria and Tasmania; but he multiplied a Wimmera station by the literary imagination and called the product Australia—actually winning quasi-Australian praise for the misrepresentation!

The grotesque English prejudice against things Australian, founded on no better reason than that they are unlike English things, still remains to vitiate the local sense of local beauty; but every year is teaching us wisdom. We have learnt to laugh at the ridiculous and reiterated fiction that our flowers have no scent and our birds no song. Why, the whole Bush is scented; in no land is there a greater wealth of aromatic perfume from tree and shrub and blossom—making the daisied meadows of England, as honest Henry Kingsley suggests, tame and suburban by comparison. And when you go up beyond the tropic-line, and walk out of your tent at dawn, the air in many places is literally weighed down with the fragrance of a hundred brilliant flowers. What would they not give in England for ten acres of wattle-blossom on Wimbledon Common? and how many nightingales would they exchange for a flight of crimson lories at sunset?—a shower of flaming rubies. Did Marcus Clarke never hear the fluting of an Australian magpie?—so mellow, so round, so sweet. If the little brown English birds sing better than our vari-plumaged parrakeets, is not the strife at least equal? Does not fine colour yield as much pleasure to the artist eye as fine song to the artist ear? When will Englified city critics realise that Australia is a country which extends through forty degrees of latitude and thirty-five of longitude, and comprehends all climates, all scenery—snow-capped mountain and torrid desert, placid lake and winding river, torrent and brook, charm as well as grandeur, garden and homely field as well as barren solitude?

It is heredity and custom which again betray us. The rose is a beautiful flower, but the most beautiful only because thousands of years of care and

cultivation have been lavished to bring it to perfection, because thousands of lovers have breathed its perfume, thousands of poets have apostrophised its exquisite form. Give the same care and cultivation to a hundred modest bush flowers, draw them from obscurity as the rose has been drawn from the parent wilderness, let them be worshipped and adored through centuries of sentiment—and we have here the rivals of the rose herself. Cluster the associations of the oak and yew around the yarran or the cedar (all the cedars of Lebanon were not more stately than those of the Herberton scrub), and the oak and yew will shrink, not indeed into insignificance, but into their proper proportion as regarded from Australia. In a word, let us look at our country and its fauna and flora, its trees and streams and mountains, through clear Australian eyes, not through bias-bleared English spectacles; and there is no more beautiful country in the world.

It will be the fault of the writers, not of the land, if Australian literature does not by-and-by become memorable. In the field of the short sketch or story, for example,—the field which includes this book,—what country can offer to writers better material than Australia? We are not yet snug in cities and hamlets, moulded by routine, regimented to a pattern. Every man who roams the Australian wilderness is a potential knight of Romance; every man who grapples with the Australian desert for a livelihood might sing a Homeric chant of victory, or listen, baffled and beaten, to an Æschylean dirge of defeat. The marvels of the adventurous are our daily common-places. The drama of the conflict between Man and Destiny is played here in a scenic setting whose novelty is full of vital suggestion for the literary artist. In the twilit labour of the timber-getter in a Richmond scrub; in the spectacle of the Westralian prospector tramping across his mirage-haunted waste; in the tropic glimpse of the Thursday Island pearling fleet, manned by men of a dozen turbulent races,—the luggers floating so calmly above a search so furious;—here, and in a hundred places beside, there is wealth of novel inspiration for the writers who will live Australia's life and utter her message. And when those writers come, let us tell them that we will never rest contented until Australian authors reach the highest standards set in literature, in order that we may set the standards higher and preach discontent anew.

A. G. STEPHENS.

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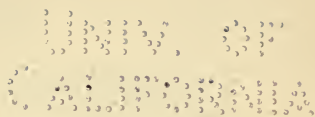
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THE PROCESSION OF EGOS.

ON each side of him, for many a mile, extended a pebbled beach shut in by hazy headlands. The quiet sea chafed gently at his feet on a myriad little stones—once hugest boulders, now worn by unwearied Time into minute and most diverse shapes.

He stooped and separated one stone from its fellows—it was so very circular. It was somewhat flat; about the size of a small coin.

Chance has formed this little pebble so, he thought. Then . . what Chance?

The Philosopher put the little stone disc in his pocket and walked home, considering deeply. He went at once to his laboratory and measured the granite fragment with his most delicate instruments. To their mechanism, capable of discriminating to a thousandth part of an inch, the circle of the thing was round, try it which way he would—round absolutely. The Philosopher was disturbed.

He leaned his head upon his hands, with his eyes fixed upon the insignificant pebble placed on the table before him.

"It seems to me," he mused, "it is no mere speculation. It is a certainty—it must be. Yet I will place the argument on paper so that no error may creep in."

He was trembling as he took a pen and wrote :

"The conception of Space necessarily insists upon an infinity of Space. If Space be not infinite, it must have a boundary. But if that boundary be not infinite, itself must have a boundary, and so on—to infinity.

"And for similar reasons, the conception of Time implies an infinity of Time.

"Therefore the material Universe—what we call Matter—occurs in an infinity of Space and Time.

"But if Space and Time be infinite, why not Matter? The infinite repetition of Matter is at least as likely as its sudden cessation. So far as human knowledge extends, Matter is infinitely repeated.

"And, so far as human knowledge extends, Matter is identical in essence. There is at least as much likelihood that its primal elements will remain the same as there is that they will change to something inconceivably different.

"This Matter must be held or governed by a condition of its own existence—since Space and Time are abstractions.

"And as Matter is identical, the Law which governs it must also be identical.

"This pebble in all its remarkable rotundity was formed by what we call Chance, which in its last analysis is only an expression of Law, and is certain and entirely inflexible.

"Given Sea, and Stone, and Time long enough, a shape such as this *must* have been formed.

"And if this shape, in the chances which Time never-ending must bring, then every and any other shape.

"But Time is not operating in its chances on this World alone, but on all other Worlds which it has formed, extending in Space illimitably.

"Therefore other discs the very counterpart of this must exist in other Worlds.

"And, the Worlds being unlimited in number, the perfect discs must be unlimited.

"But Chance must repeat the shape and characteristics of this World as it repeats the discs.

"And, as the Worlds are unlimited, and Time has never begun nor yet can end, some World must be so like that the similarity will extend to every islet, to every rock, to every

pebble, and to that pebble's exact position on the sea-beach as I found this.

"Chance, then, in its infinite variety, must at this moment hold sway over a World which is in everything the precise replica of this World—with like human beings, like laws, customs, languages, and religions—like to the tiniest grain of sand, and to the most transient thought flickering through a brain—a perfect identity.

"There must be therefore a Man like me—of my name—of my past—a Man who is now writing—who is now thinking what I am now thinking—who picked up lately, as I did, a remarkable pebble.

"But, as there is a limitless series of Worlds subject to Chance, there must be a limitless series of Worlds such as this.

"And as Time ever was and ever will be, there now as necessarily must be, must ever have been, and ever will be, an infinite series of . . ."

He broke off here—the room seemed so small and its confines so insupportable. He went out into the night wind, which enveloped him with its grateful chill.

A swart cloud hung sullen under the face of the moon. Before him crouched in the darkness an undefined mass. It was a rugged hill, strewn with rocks and smoothed boulders. He gained the summit, and bared his head to the stronger breeze. The cloud had moved and no longer prevented the moon's light.

And the Philosopher now for the first time became aware of a rhythmic murmur—not loud and thundering, but enormous in its pervasiveness. *Tramp!*—it sounded . . . *tramp!* . . . *tramp!* . . .

He looked at the landscape below and saw at first dimly, then quite distinctly, an expanse of people. It was the noise of their walking he had heard as they marched past the hill with measured and unhurried step. They entirely filled the view, save on the side on which he stood, and they rolled on as a sea that rolls to meet a sea.

Looking still more intently, the Philosopher perceived with a terror, the like of which he had never imagined before, that every man of the crowd was a likeness of himself dreadful in its exactness.

Yet they paid no sort of attention to him, but continued their sombre way.

Impelled by a strange curiosity, he shouted to them :

“ Where do I come from ? ”

He had intended to say—“ Where do *you* come from ? ” but in some inexplicable way, and in spite of himself, he was compelled to say “ I ” instead of “ you.”

Then all who marched below, to the most remote of them, turned their heads backwards and peered at him with contracted brows, and peered most curiously, and said together in one great voice, enquiringly, yet somewhat sadly withal :

“ Where do I come from ? ”

Then he asked again, being again impelled to say “ I ” instead of “ you ” :

“ How far do I extend ? ”

And all the men who marched below suddenly raised themselves a-tip-toe to look over one another's head, and answered blankly :

“ How far do I extend ? ”

And once more, notwithstanding his fear, he asked a further question, not this time essaying to speak the word “ you,” for it was impossible :

“ Where am I going ? ”

And at this question all the landscape of faces with the moonlight on them turned towards him, and looked at him with frightful mockery, and answered :

“ Where am I going ? ”

But the sound of their voice was so loud and pervading that the hill on which he stood quivered to its rooted depths. Its cliffs rose from the earth and flung themselves headlong down sheer steep. Massy stones, lying squat, starred and split to their bellied

bases. The rounded granite pebbles crumbled into dust. The moon herself, serenest of spheres, darkened her ray and trembled in her silver chains ; and the stars sparkled fitfully and sought vainly to forsake their customary paths. Nor was the sound unfelt by the nether and piled universes for ever.

He hastened down the quaking hillside and joined the infinite throng.

J. F. MILLINGTON.



A ROW IN OUR BOARDING-HOUSE.

THE trouble began on the night when a newly-imported British youth named Johnson appeared at our boarding-house.

There were ten of us there before his arrival, including Bem, the Polish tailor, who was vaguely understood to have thrown bombs at all the royal families of Europe, and then gone into exile. We paid seventeen shillings a week each, not including washing ; and we lived riotously on boiled mutton. There were more empty beer-bottles in the bedrooms, and more laughter, and more grease slopped on the floor, and the candle-ends got into the soup oftener in that boarding-house than in any other I ever heard of. Also, the neighbours got less sleep than anybody ever did in the vicinity of any other boarding-house. The dining-room had not been papered since the beginning of history, and the landlady had only one eye ; also, her daughter had recently eloped with a non-union printer. She, the landlady, was aged about 40, and wore a green dress, and in the evenings she used to sing songs to us with her hair down. These few details will convey a reasonably good idea of the nature of that wild Bohemian establishment.

One windy evening in March, the landlady had agitated the bell on the stairs, as was her custom. Her weapon was a sort of cowbell, and when she wrestled with it on the murky staircase she looked like a witch dancing on a heath. Her arms, her hair, her feet, her green dress, her trodden-down shoes flew in eight different directions, and her one eye and the bell flew in two more. Strangers coming down in the dark, and meeting this apparition suddenly, generally took her for a heap of boa-constrictor, or an immense octopus leaping on the top step. Poor old agitated female—she is dead now. She broke her neck in the passage one day, rushing

down to look at a funeral. But if she had kept on ringing that dinner-bell she would have been immortal. Death could n't have aimed straight enough to hit her in her gambols.

I rushed down to the dining-room at the first signal, and, meeting Bem and two more coming tumultuously in the opposite direction, we got jammed in the doorway. I was just going to pass some uncomplimentary observations when we all caught sight of a spectacle such as the oldest individual in that boarding-house had never seen before. A great calm descended upon us, and we disentangled ourselves and went in silently.

What I saw was an object like a naked infant's hind-leg, resting in a careless, graceful attitude against a chair. There was a bracelet on it, and attached to one end of it was a woman. She was attired in a silk dress which exposed her right down to the fifth knob of her spine, or thereabouts, and she had a necklace, and an eye-glass, and sundry rings. There was a frozen expression in her eye—a look of cold derision that seemed to fall like a curse upon the whole company. This was Johnson's wife. Johnson himself was there, in a tail-coat, and a tremendous collar, and another eye-glass, and he had a silver bangle on his wrist. He was the first male human being that I ever saw inside a bangle, and I am prepared to swear that he was the very first who ever wore a bangle in a boarding-house.

Between them they made just one remark all dinner-time. It was "Haw!" I could have said the same thing myself if I had been dead.

We did not eat much that evening, and there was very little conversation. We were all paralysed by the spectacle of Johnson and his wife. They kept looking round the table in a pensive, perplexed sort of way, as if they were searching for some of the commonest necessities of life, such as were to be found in stacks in their ancestral castle; and then they would wake up as from a dream, and recollect suddenly that they were castaways in a savage land where the wild aborigines never heard of the article, whatever it might be. And when they were finished the lady went and

smote the piano with an arm of might for about 38 minutes, after which the pair retired and were seen no more that night.

That was the beginning of the row in our boarding-house.

Next morning the owner of the establishment came down early and refreshed herself with a few melodies before breakfast. She was a strange, promiscuous, half-savage female, and was wont at times to get up before daybreak, and thud out all manner of lost chords on the keyboard, and then she would keep time with her slippers and her head, and whirl her tangled locks in the air, and cast the tails of her dressing-gown out behind her in a frenzy of inspiration. After that she would scuttle away with a prodigious clatter, and clutch the sausages that were to be fried for breakfast, and for about half-an-hour the air would be darkened with a chaos of food and dishes, and it would blow a gale of gravy, cruets, loaves, and similar properties. When she entered with the breakfast-tray it always made me think of Napoleon's commissariat-department flying from Moscow, for she generally arrived at a gallop, shoving one-half the provisions in front of her and dragging the other half behind, and hissing to scare off the cat, which ran with its tail up in the rear of the procession, trying vainly to claw at the alleged eatables.

Then she would fling herself on the bell like a hash-house keeper possessed, and make a riot that was calculated to wake the lost souls of all the dead boarders who had shuffled off this mortal coil, and were eating spectral ham and eggs in the fields of asphodel. On this morning I found her leaping and gambolling on the stairs as usual, and I stopped to propound a solemn question.

"Mrs. Jones," I said sternly, "who are the partially-dressed intruder in the bed-furniture, and the tailor's advertisement with the jewellery on his fore-leg?"

"He's in the Gas-Office!" she replied in gasps, as she threw herself up against the air with the bell. "Newly-married! He's English, and got £80 a year! I took them in at a reduced rate!"

"Oh, you did! Now, look here; have you any reason to suppose he's a duke or an emperor, or anything of the sort?"

"No!"

"Do you suppose, as a respectable Christian woman, that he's got a castle anywhere?"

"No, I don't s'pose he has."

"*Did* he come in with the Conqueror, now?"

"There was n't anybody with him when he came in, that I saw."

"And did you know when you took them in that she was going to stick so far out of her clothes?"

"No, I DID N'T. If I'd knowed it I'd have throwed her out."

I went in to breakfast in a subdued mood. Johnson was there, looking with a shocked expression at the sausages, and shuddering in a new bangle and a collar that was six times taller than the previous one. His wife, with a fresh bracelet, was glaring at the same viand, and the expression in her eye seemed to say, "Where am I? Is this a horrid dream?" It was the only morning in six months, too, when the sausages had n't either fallen under the grate or been dropped on the stairs, and this made their conduct all the more uncalled-for.

At lunch-time Johnson's wife appeared in another fresh bracelet, and with a profusion of jewellery on her right forefinger. And as for Johnson, astounding as it may seem, he had a third bangle on. Evidently he had one for each meal, and this was his lunch-bangle.

In the evening the lady had another silk dress on, and it exposed one knob more of her spine than her previous one. Johnson wore his second clean collar and his dinner-bangle, and his small countenance, looming over his great expanse of shirt-front, looked like a pallid bird of prey on the top of an icy mountain. They talked together in scraps of inferior French, and when the meal was over Mrs. Johnson again smote the piano, and then retired coldly to her own apartments.

That night we held an indignation meeting on the balcony. The landlady had deposited the vegetable-dish out there through the window when she was getting ready to make her turbulent entry with the pudding, and had forgotten it. Inside there were two candles burning, and one lamp with a broken shade—the gas had been cut off for non-payment. The bread was in a plate on top of the piano, and the dishes were in an unwashed condition downstairs, and the mistress of the house was singing a shrill melody in the kitchen. And amid these surroundings Bem, the Polish tailor, passed a resolution that he would drive Johnson off the premises, or die in the attempt. After that our souls felt relieved, and we settled down to placid harmony. Somebody found some liquor in a bottle under his bed and brought it down. The cards were fished out, and we played Nap, and gave each other I O U's on a lavish scale. The lamp flickered and went out with an awful smell. Then one of the candles died amid a tremendous blob of grease, and we gave up playing, and smoked in the semi-darkness. The bread cast a long, gaunt shadow on top of the piano, and the vegetable-dish was still forgotten on the balcony. And, finally, our landlady burst in with the green dress partially open at the back, and wearing a hat decorated with six broken feathers; and fell over the cat in the doorway; and played some tune that was all discords, on the piano, while Bem sang a dirge about some forgotten period when he lived alongside a river, and went out musing with a female by moonlight. He was so moved by the recollection that he wept into the last candle, and it went out also, leaving us in darkness.

I woke on that third morning with a vague and indefinable feeling that somebody had died in the night. There was a Sabbath calm brooding over Jones's boarding-house which was quite foreign to that clamorous establishment, and as I listened it suddenly occurred to me that Bem must have carried out his threat, and dynamited Johnson in the darkness. All the doors seemed to close softly, instead of shutting with a soul-destroying bang as usual. The landlady flopped about gently on her trodden-down shoes,

instead of bringing in the breakfast with a crash and a shriek, and shedding dishes about in all directions; and she rang the bell gently, whereas she usually rang it like a dray-load of escaped lunatics. I descended the stairs amid a prevailing smell of ham and eggs, and went into the dining-room.

Johnson was breakfasting with a troubled expression and a bangle, and his wife was glaring across the table. Opposite them Bem was solemnly feeding in evening dress. He looked absolutely vacant, and seemed to be lost in profound thought, and the frantic excitement of the other eight boarders made no impression on him at all. He wore a pair of kid gloves and a bracelet, and his moustache was elegantly waxed. Johnson rose at last, and walked round this apparition, but the apparition never moved. Finally the Pole got up, and thoughtfully extracted an ancient, battered straw hat from under his chair, and, having jammed it hard down on his head, he went out of the room and out of the house like a man who was lost in profound vacancy.

Nobody spoke. A species of paralysis seemed to have descended on that boarding-house. But, after a moment, Johnson rushed on to the balcony and glared in a cataleptic fashion after this unaccountable visitant. And outside, on the stairs, stood a petrified landlady, in a smudged green dress, and with a hat with six broken feathers in it cocked rakishly over one eye, and two misfit shoes that seemed to have taken root in the floor. She held a teapot in one hand and a pie in the other, and she was unconsciously pouring the tea into the pie, and the pie on to the staircase.

Bem turned up in the evening costume again at lunch-time, but, though expectation rose to fever-heat, nothing happened. Owing to mental strain, however, the landlady fainted in the sink in the course of the afternoon.

At dinner, the Johnsons began to show signs of wear and tear. Mrs. Johnson's left eyebrow was out of line, and her complexion had shifted round to her ear. Evidently it had been put on with a

reckless hand, while the wearer was under the influence of considerable excitement. Her husband had an enraged and harassed look, and his tie was off the straight, and his hair was crumpled. The landlady's shoes were in the hall, from which I gathered that she had lost them in her agitation; and her hat was under the table. As for that joyous Bohemian herself, she was dodging round in a semi-hysterical condition, and when I entered she had just given Johnson the whole dish of potatoes, and had shoved the entire joint on another boarder's plate, after which she deposited the kettle in an abstracted manner on the tablecloth. Then she fled unaccountably round the table and supplied us all with a number of other remarkable things too numerous and too badly assorted to mention. There was a dead and awful silence in the company—a silence that was too awful to be accounted for on the supposition that Bem had appeared again in evening-dress and caused a panic. For one awful moment the thought occurred to me that the insane Pole might possibly have appeared clothed in a marked scarcity of dress of any kind——

He entered at that moment, carefully removing a shiny bell-topper as he came in, and depositing a pair of gloves in its inmost recesses. He was attired in grey pants and a linen jacket, but he had taken the sleeves out of the jacket and out of his shirt, and he was "cut low" at the neck. Also, he wore a gold bracelet—in fact, he was a remarkably good copy of Johnson's wife. The landlady uttered a shriek when she saw him, and disappeared down the stairs. The cat escaped up the chimney, scattering last night's dead ashes out of the grate as it went. The other boarders choked with insane glee, but Bem only contemplated them for an instant with a lack-lustre eye and a funereal visage, and sat down. He was the one unmoved individual in the company.

Then Johnson arose, and shaking a fork in the air with a palsied hand, he made a brief oration.

"I give notice," he shrieked, "that I will leave this den of infamy at the end of this week. I am accustomed—I mean, I am not accustomed—British constitution—degraded parody upon a

human being—I refuse to associate—dash and confound the—the—objectionable ruffian opposite—insolent outrage upon all gentlemanly sentiment—gorilla on the other side of the table——”

He gave out there, and choked. With a wild howl he heaved up the table and capsized the ruins of it bodily at Bem, and then he tramped heavily over the débris and engaged his enemy in mortal combat. The Pole emerged from the wreckage, and with his hair full of gravy, and corned beef in both ears, and one eye stopped up with cabbage, and mustard streaming down his back, he flew at Johnson like a wild cat. The candles went out; Mrs. Johnson shrieked in the passage; the landlady wailed dismally in the kitchen; and all was horror and confusion.

There was an item in Johnson's bill when he left, which read: “Broken crockery, 22s. 6d.” I believe he hypothecated his lunch-bangle to pay it. The gas has been turned on again since then, and the landlady sings weird songs to us in the gloaming, with her hair down as of old. She wears the same green dress, and drops her shoes all over the house as before, but it is n't the same landlady—the old one broke her neck on the stairs as beforementioned, and her daughter has inherited her clothes and the business, and she rings the dinner-bell with even more vim than her lamented predecessor. She reminds me very much of her mother, for she drops the meals on the stairs in a way that calls up sad, pathetic memories; and she rushes in as recklessly holding out the gravy in front of her, and rushes out again as madly to look for the vegetables, as her deceased relative could have done. Johnson is in gaol somewhere—there was a gap in his accounts which even his jewellery could not fill; and the wife has eloped with our new landlady's husband, the printer. Also, nobody wears evening-dress at our boarding-house any more.

JAMES EDMOND.

SOME OF FATE'S PUPPETS.

LOOKING toward his home, Moore caught a glimpse of light through the trees. It came from his wife's bedroom, most likely? He wondered vaguely what would be her greeting. She had expected him to return in five weeks; it was exactly five hours since she had waved good-bye to him from the wharf. He pondered without interest the question what she would have thought, and said, and done, had the other steamer been moving just a little faster and sent them all to eternity.

He had expected to find the house in darkness. Yet where was the need to alter his pace? What did he gain by getting home a minute sooner—say, before his wife put out her light? He would have to depict the scene of the collision for her; and he was in the wrong mood for that. She would be full of wifely interest, womanly sympathy, about his share. Could a woman never escape from her sex? Exalted to a position of mock heroism by his wife! In contemplation of the part marked for him he felt that he could weep—tears of petulance.

The thought recurred—if it had ended otherwise, giving his wife the freedom to shape her course anew? A loss or gain to her? Neither, in any great degree, he could answer. She would marry again; he could look calmly at that, with even a smile at his inability to give distinct features to the figure his fancy conjured up as his successor. There was the boy—a different matter; but as *he* had his father's blood in him, he could be left almost unconsidered; he would work out his own destiny.

His wife was eight years younger—barely thirty; bright, clever, good-looking. One who met life gaily,—who, with a nature as deep as anyone's, yet immersed herself in superficialities. An anomaly;

the centre of it hidden from him. Their natures were widely divergent : they were fettered together, yet trod separate paths.

Was that to be regretted ? No ; or at least in a very limited number of aspects. Their married life fell midway between happiness and discontent, touching neither. Life to him was mostly on that plane.

Perhaps the one thing he regretted—if anything in life were serious enough to demand regret—was the fact of his marrying at all. That had been a mistake ; one among many ; all the natural issue of the mistake of continuing to live. A world of error ! How could it be otherwise, when the right thing lay undecipherable amid a bewilderment of illusion ?

Looking up at the house, he noted that it was the drawing-room that was lighted—a matter that called for surprise ; but he was reluctant to confess to any. The drawing-room was seldom used at night, the dining-room downstairs being occupied as a sitting-room. Only when visitors came in the evening—an unusual event—was it necessary to go upstairs.

He went to the back of the house and found it dark. The servants must have gone to bed, but that was denied in the fact of visitors being present. They had gone out before the visitors came, and had not returned ? Yet that seemed unlikely, since the house was shut. He tried one door—to find it locked. Was it that his wife was alone, and feeling timid had locked up the house before the servants came in ? Then there were no visitors, and she was sitting by herself in the drawing-room—a change from her ordinary habit, induced by her loneliness. Probably she had been at the piano. On this theory the seeming contradictions were congruous and intelligible.

He was about to ascend the back stairs when he remembered that the key of one door had been lost a few days before. He turned the handle and entered ; darkness enveloped him. He walked carefully, so as not to startle his wife by any noise. He was fortunate enough to find a clear passage, and reaching the foot of the stairs safely he began to ascend, keeping a hand on the balustrade.

The silence of the house seemed an ominous thing; Moore caught himself stopping to listen to it. At the turning he halted; his heart was beating strangely fast, his blood alert, as if expectant of something. He was visited by an outrageous thought. "Was he in the wrong house?" He was about to consider the question, to sum up remembrance, when he heard a voice—pitched, sustained, with a musical clearness in the sound—a man's voice. He was struck aghast—the thing was so contrary to anything the circumstances made possible. He *was* awake, and in his own home. His mind ran back, but he found no rest for his thought; no haziness in his remembrance. A gleam of light shot across the events of the day, revealing them to him in one immediate glance—distinct and in order, carrying him to his presence there.

He had ascended to the top of the stairs, and his hand now encountered an overcoat. The touch of it sent a shock through him that reduced him to material facts of life. He took up the hat that was on the stair-post, and, handling it, was vaguely glad he could not name the owner. Neither did the voice help him to a guess, though he heard it more distinctly now—the voice of a man reading aloud.

Why was his first conscious instinct a desire to escape—to descend the stairs and go out into the street till he could consider what to do? Surely small consideration was necessary; his imperative duty lay before him, not behind. Was it that he felt some charity towards his wife? Was it for *her* sake that he did not wish to come upon them? Or was it wholly a fear to take up his own part in the discovery; a fear that had masked itself in subtle disguise?

He had leaned back against the wall, but now stood up; he was in no need of support. But he could not calm his heart; his blood tingled through his veins, giving him an odd sense of a new value in life—a value that deficient human senses could not quite lay hold of. Existence seemed to promise something. A clear happiness when his present task was accomplished? He asked himself the question.

Looking up the corridor, he saw the ray of light that came through the drawing-room door. What was the scene that the door hid from him? And what was the basis of the sudden, bitter prayer that it should close fast now, and, opening to no one's effort, bury those two within walls? It was the awakening of the husband within him: he knew it, and felt it in a weakening of his blood. He was no longer his old self, but one among a hundred; acting a part that had so often been acted before—the meanest part that could be given to a high-minded man. In angry denial of such conception of himself—in attempt to shut it out, he went up the passage.

The length appeared interminable, the noise of his walking was deafening, and the walls seemed to close in upon him as he passed. Even at the threshold of the door he had a prompting that it was not too late to turn back; but he compressed his lips and entered. A flood of warm light seemed to close around him. The fancy gave him strength; he became calmer; it was as if he had been spiritually welcomed.

In one glimpse he saw the pair; the noise of his footsteps had alarmed them; they stood separate, the first instinctive movement of each had been towards an individual defence. The identity of the man gave no surprise; he was not able to be surprised, more intense feelings finding place with him.

It was Leston, a young doctor who had recently come to the town. He remembered, even at this turbulent moment, that he had once remarked to his wife that Leston was distinctly a good-looking man; a judgment that she had not wholly acceded to. Was this idle word the germinal cause of his present dishonour? The thing was almost worth enquiry. He could not recall that there had been much intimacy between his wife and Leston. But then the husband is ever the last to see what is happening at his side.

She was dressed in a pale blue tea-gown, a ribbon at her throat. He could think that this evening she must have looked remarkably well, but now the deadly pallor and set cast of her features showed

only a mind in travail. She was standing behind a chair, her hands clasping the back of it.

She was small in stature, but carried herself well; her eyes gave a depth, her lips were finely cut, her face in every pose showed the strength of fearlessness. Young, with good features and an abundance of dark brown hair, she was a woman who impressed one with a sense of woman's witchery over man.

"You!" she said quiveringly, almost as he entered. It seemed as if the word broke from her, before she was conscious of the effort to speak.

He crossed over to the mantelpiece, and, resting one arm there, stood facing her. He could see that Leston was shifting his gaze from one to the other, unknowing what to do, or what was to be done. The feverish excitement of his wife stirred an echo in him: he endeavoured to steady his voice.

"I have disturbed you," he said.

"It seems like it!" Her laughter rang out; recklessness, nervousness, echoing in the notes of it.

She knew now that he had long suspected her; that his departure had been but a trick. He had come back to discover the thing he looked for. In her feminine mind, the pitiful meanness of his manner of unmasking her—not to include the full success of it—made him appear contemptible. For the moment, her sin was in some retrospective way justified by it; and she was conscious of the vividness of the impression that she too gained in being no longer compelled to deceive. How much easier it was to acknowledge guilt than it would have been to deny!

Moore kept his eyes off Leston; he was aware of being more assured of the man's weakness than of his own strength. And his wife would feel a keener shame in his looking to her as the only guilty one.

He addressed himself to her with gay pretence. "A friend of yours?"

Could any man but he be so infamous as to amuse himself with her shame? Could he not see that the shame was partly his?

She would force him to feel it. "You can call him what you like."

"A lover, then?"

She had courted the word, yet her woman's nature felt a stab. "Lover!" It seemed to cry itself in the street, to be caught on the wind, and carried echoing to the ears of the outer world. But she had compelled him to explicitly attack her. "You have defined him—and yourself," she said.

"And also you."

Strange that she had not foreseen to what she would lay herself open. Was it that her mind was not capable of calm thought? Must she acknowledge that she was not able to cope with him? She saw her woman's heart as the foundation of defeat. Was his strength more than of manhood—an individual element in him? She felt suddenly that he could do as he willed with her; that he could make her kneel to him; make her pitifully repentant. She saw the future and its threats against her; a word rang in her brain that would not be driven out.

In protest of finding herself at that depth, she looked at the man for whom she had sacrificed herself. But there was no help for her there; he was younger, more hesitating than herself. In a flash she realised that she was more to blame than he; that she had not less misshaped his life, than her own. Shiveringly she felt her isolation; a guilty woman at the mercy of the world.

Moore watched her unflinchingly. He was surprised at the ease with which he had taken command of the situation; how calmly he held it. A few moments before he had not known what to do, but now he could think coolly, see clearly. Victory was his, even a kind of victory over Fate, who had prepared a situation in which he was to have been made to play a ridiculously pitiful part.

He felt no pang in knowing he was a dishonoured husband, and endeavored to persuade himself that there was no reason why he should feel one. But he was wise enough to know that his strength lay in contempt of the pair before him, in making them realise themselves contemptible.

"What is the book?" he asked, gazing at a volume that lay open on the floor where it had been dropped.

"Does *that* interest you?" she said angrily.

"Naturally. It has interested you."

"A loving husband!" She laughed scornfully—at herself and him.

"You seem to regret something."

"Our marriage?" she suggested.

"My God, woman, not half as much as I do—as I have done from the first."

He moved his arm, and accidentally upset a vase; it fell on the floor breaking into fragments. The noise resounded through the house. To the woman's excited fancy it was a signal of something that was to happen; she looked to the door expecting to see a terrifying shape take entrance. She listened, and afar off she thought she heard the faint tolling of a bell. Her heart stopped, then beat to the tolling. She felt chilled to the blood.

Leston stood watching the scene before him with a weak resentment of his impotence. The fear that had first seized him had in contemplation of the husband's calmness given place to a desire to assert himself, to claim a share in the guilt. It was distinctly a situation that demanded a show of courage from him. Yet he was completely ignored. The tragedy which he had helped to create was being played out without one thought of him. He chafed at the humiliation of his position, yet could not summon the courage to escape from it.

Moore considered the import of the silence, then permitted himself to add, at a measured pace—"We both made a mistake. And the issue—we have here. Well, even of that I can bear my part. But your part—I honestly pity."

She seemed heedless of all around; her eyes hung on the doorway expectantly. "I can do without it," she said pettishly.

"I am aware of that, and I can easily understand it. You get rid of me, and you take in my place—this." He turned to

Leston, and the man shrank back ashamed. "A pretty boy, young enough to be educated to appreciate you."

"Oh, stop! stop!" she cried.

A child, barefooted and clad in a nightgown, stood hesitant at the door. He was about seven years old, and in features a likeness of his father. The mother saw him, and called him to her with a look.

Moore followed her gaze, and knew then that it was not the sting of his words that had moved her, but only the fear of the child understanding. "Frank!" he said sharply to the boy, "Come here!"

Disobedience of that voice was impossible; he came like a dog.

"Close the door—and take that chair."

The boy did his bidding, and then sat looking at his mother; his childish astonishment addressed to her.

The woman stood up with locked hands—supplicating, speechless.

"You are not forbidden to look upon him," said Moore, coldly, in answer.

"Send him away," she whispered, quiveringly.

"His proper place is here."

She flung herself on the chair, in a passion of weeping, her soul given up to despair.

"Father, ——" began the boy.

"Sit there, sir! Don't move till I tell you!" he was answered.

Leston crossed over and stood beside the woman; an opening was offered him. "For the child's sake, if not for hers, send him away!"

Moore laughed in contemptuous derision. "Surely *you* are imposing on your position!"

"I do not know about that, but you are cruelly imposing upon yours."

"If you dare to question me, by the living God I'll throw you over that balcony!" His violent utterance rang true, and the echo of it, adding further excitement to his blood, made him dangerously apt to do what he threatened.

"Don't speak to him!" said Mrs. Moore, in alarmed protest. "You do not know how passionate—— And you can do no good."

Leston, warm in offence, hated now to acknowledge to a physical fear. With his whole soul he longed for action. But for her sake he must submit; and because he was so checked and hampered he began to look forward to escape. Yet honour compelled him to stay.

"How long is this going to continue?" he said at length. "What are you going to do?"

"There is nothing more for me to do; the rest falls on you!" The man's thought ran to dramatic utterance. Yet he had an educated disdain of the stage.

"What am *I* to do?"

"Leave this house at once—and take her with you." Moore was only outwardly calm; his strength had departed, and he knew that he was physically ill. He feared that he could not maintain his part to the end. He wished they would hurry—a mad desire to escape from the room had seized him.

"Come, Lucy!" said Leston, bending over her. He wondered that he should so quietly accept the burden of her, though he knew there was nothing else that he could do.

Her sobs had ceased; she sat with her face hidden, giving no sign that she heard.

"Lucy!" It was an appeal to her to look up, so that he might read the reason of her unwillingness.

She jumped up quickly, and, throwing herself out of his embracing arms, staggered against a small desk that stood by the wall, and halted with her back to it.

"No, I will not go!" she cried. "Not though he orders it. I stay here—my place is here. I could not go with you. How could you think of it? It would mean——" She turned quickly to her husband. "Can I stay? Only till to-morrow. See, I ask it; on my knees, if I must."

"You can do as you will," he said, simply. "I will offer no objection now."

She turned to Leston, speaking from a centre that was hidden from him. "You can go."

"But you!"

"Go!" she commanded.

He made his pitiful departure. Moore felt an infinite relief; he sat down wearily in a chair, his face turned from her.

She saw the depth of his despair, and her heart moved madly—responsive to her thoughts. Her fault rose up behind her, threatening to advance and overwhelm her—a purpose beckoned her to escape.

"Will you put Frank to bed?" She spoke quietly; a new strength had been given her.

He looked up in surprise. The fact of having to be told by her what he must do was a shock to him. He saw how far beneath command of himself he had sunk, but he made no effort to recover.

"Yes," he said.

The child followed him, nervous, crying pitifully, and was the more abandoned in his tears that he knew not very definitely why he should cry.

In quieting him, Moore promised that his mother would not leave him; that she would not be permitted. He attempted to persuade himself that though he had lost a wife, he had no right to deprive the child of a mother. He felt happier in such a thought, though he knew he was but juggling with his mind.

The soft promises he had to make to the boy helped to soothe himself as well. But he saw no course of action, nor what in honour he could offer her.

He went back to the drawing-room, possessed of a full indifference. He himself was under no necessities. Fate could do with him as it would. Or his wife could decide what was to be; he would stand aside, offering no opposition to either.

"You have come back," she said. "I hoped you would." He acquiesced dully and stood by the doorway. He had a horror of

taking up his old position by the mantelpiece. The woman read a hatred of coming near to her.

He had leisure to notice her ; to see that her face paled and flushed, that her eyes were luminously bright. She stood as when he had left her, yet her attitude seemed constrained.

He had to break through a silence. "What is it you want with me?"

"Nothing. Unless——"

"Well?"

"To hear your reproaches."

"Lucy!" He reproached her levity.

She laughed defiantly, but her laughter rang hollow. "Tell me how much you despise me," she said. "How much you hate me! Do!"

"How much I pity you ; how much I pity us both!"

"Oh, Harry! Not that," she said with a shiver. "Do not conquer me! Be harsh! Treat me as I deserve! Why don't you hate me?"

"Say because Frank does n't. He will not let his mother leave him ; I had to promise that she would not."

She looked long in silence ; as if she could not credit him. Her breath came in short gasps. Not till he again glanced up at her did she find utterance. "The poor child—the darling! And I—my pride in him should have saved me. I wonder why it did not? I have been mad this last month—not myself. Oh, the horror of it now!"

"Will you stay?"

"You had to promise him, you say. That was cruelly hard on you."

"I have not said that. Will you stay?"

He was aware that he was offering her all that was in his heart ; and more than was in his mind. He knew not where he stood. His head swam ; the walls of the room seemed to recede, then halt and come slowly back. He looked up—to see his wife fall forward on her face.

He ran to her, and knelt beside her, his mind in the travail of unshaped fears. He lifted her in his arms and turned her face towards him.

"Lucy, what is it? You are ill! You have hurt yourself!" A convulsion seized her, and left her with her features set in distortion.

"You would take me back?" she whispered.

"For his sake."

"Ah, yes," she sighed. She held a pause, then asked—"Not for my own?"

His face hardened; she asked more than he could give her.

"Let me go!" she cried. "Do not hold me! How can you when you hate me so?" Her violence carried her out of his arms, and she stopped at a distance from him.

"I do not hate you, Lucy. You know I don't. But I cannot pretend that I have forgiven you."

"I did not ask for that; I only meant—but it does n't matter. It is best that it should end now."

"End, Lucy?"

"Can't you see?" she cried fiercely.

He caught an inspiration from her tone; an infinite horror surged through him. "Lucy! have you poisoned yourself?" He made a step towards her.

"Don't come near me!" she screamed, raising herself on her hands. "I will not let you touch me!"

"Lucy!" Horror held him in its embrace; he was capable only of a weak utterance of her name.

"Listen!" she cried excitedly. "Frank is calling me. You hear him? Let me go to him!" She looked up for permission, as he stood senselessly watching her.

"Do not follow me!" she said. "Let me go alone. I must see him before——"

She staggered to her feet, and, reaching the doorway, steadied herself there and went down the passage.

The child was crying upon the bed; her screams had alarmed

him. She hurried, and coming heavily against the wall staggered back from it—fell, with outstretched hands—quivered, and lay motionless.

Moore, looking vacantly down at her, wondered dully why the child was sobbing.

JOHN REAY WATSON.



LONG CHARLEY'S GOOD LITTLE WIFE.

THERE was the island, only ten miles away, and there it had been for a whole week. Sometimes we got near enough to see Long Charley's house and the figures of natives walking on the yellow beach ; and then the westerly current would take us away to leeward again. But that night a squall came up, and in half-an-hour we were running down to the land. When the lights on the beach showed up we hove-to until daylight, and then found the surf too heavy to let us land.

We got in close to the reef, and could see that the trader's copra-house was full, for there were hundreds of bags outside, awaiting our boats. It was clearly worth staying for. The trader, a tall, thin, pyjama-clad man, came down to the water's edge, waved his long arm, and then turned back and sat down on a bag of copra. We went about and passed the village again, and once more the long man came to the water's edge, waved his arm, and retired to his seat.

In the afternoon we saw a native and Charley together among the bags ; then the native left him, and, as it was now low tide, the kanaka was able to walk to the edge of the reef, where he signalled to us. Seeing that he meant to swim off, the skipper went in as close as possible, and backed his fore-yard. Watching his chance for a lull in the still fierce breakers, the native slid over the reef and swam out to us as only a Line Islander or a Tokelau man can swim.

"How's Charley?" we asked, when the dark man reached the deck.

"Who? Charley? Oh, he fine! plenty copra. Tāpā! my bowels are filled with the sea—for one dollar! Here *ariki vaka* (captain) and you *tubi tubi* (supercargo)," said the native, removing

from his perforated and pendulous ear-lobe a little roll of leaf, "take this letter from the mean one that giveth but a dollar for facing such a *galu* (surf). Hast plenty tobacco on board, friends of my heart? Apā, the surf! Not a canoe crew could the white man get to face it. Is it good twist tobacco, friends, or the flat cakes? Know that I am a man of Nanomea, not one of these dog-eating people here, and a strong swimmer; else the letter had not come."

The supercargo took the note. It was rolled up in many thicknesses of banana-leaf, which had kept it dry:—

"Dear Friends,—I have Been waiting for you for near 5 months. I am Chock full of Cobberah and Shark Fins one Ton. I am near Starved Out, No Biscit, no Beef, no flour, not Enything to Eat. for god's Saik send me a case of Gin ashore if you don't mean to Hang on till the sea goes Down. Not a Woman comes Near me because I am Run out of Traid so please try also to Send a Peece of Good print as there are some fine Women here from Nukunau and I think I can get one for a wife if I am smart. If you Can't take my Cobberah and mean to Go away send the Squair face* for god's saik and something for the Woman.—Your obliged Friend, CHARLES."

We parcelled a bottle of gin round with a small coir line, and sent it ashore by the Nanomea man. Charley and a number of natives came to the edge of the reef to lend a hand in landing the bearer of the treasure. Then they all waded back to the beach, headed by the white man in the dirty pyjamas and sodden-looking *fala* hat. Reaching his house he turned his following away and shut the door.

"I bet a dollar he would n't swap billets with the angel Gabriel at this partickler moment," said the profane mate, thoughtfully.

We started weighing and shipping the copra next day. After finishing up, the solemn Charley invited the skipper and supercargo

* Square-face=Hollands gin.

to remain ashore till morning. His great trouble, he told us, was that he had not yet secured a wife, "a reg'lar wife, y' know." He had, unluckily, "lost the run" of the last Mrs. Charley during his absence at another island of the group, and negotiations with various local young women had been broken off owing to his having run out of trade. In the South Seas, as in Australia and elsewhere, to get the girl of your heart is generally a mere matter of trade. There were, he told us with a melancholy look, "some fine Nukunau girls here on a visit, but the one I want don't seem to care much about stayin', unless all this new trade fetches her."

"Who is she?" inquired the skipper.

"Tibākwā's daughter."

"Let's have a look at her!" said the skipper, a man of kind impulses, who felt sorry at the intermittency of the Long One's connubial relations.

The tall, scraggy trader shambled to the door and bawled out "Tibākwā, Tibākwā, Tibākwā, O!" three times.

The people singing in the big *moniep* or town-house stopped their monotonous droning, and the name of Tibākwā was yelled vociferously throughout the village in true Gilbert Group style. In the Gilberts, if a native in one corner of a house speaks to another in the opposite corner, he bawls loud enough to be heard a mile off.

Tibākwā (The Shark) was a short, squat fellow, with his broad back and chest scored and seamed with an intricate and inartistic network of cicatrices made by shark's-teeth swords. His hair, straight, coarse and jet-black, was cut away square from just above his eyebrows to the top of his ears, leaving his fierce countenance in a sort of frame. Each ear-lobe bore a load—one had two or three sticks of tobacco, twined in and about the distended circle of flesh, and the other a clasp-knife and wooden pipe. Stripped to the waist, he showed his muscular outlines to perfection, and he sat down unmasked in the bold, self-confident, half-defiant manner natural to the Line Islander.

"Where's Tirau?" asked the trader.

"Here," said the man of wounds, pointing outside, and he called out in a voice like the bellow of a bull—"Tirau O, nako mai!" (Come here!)

Tirau came in timidly, clothed only in a *ridi* or girdle, and slunk into a far corner.

The melancholy trader and the father pulled her out, and she dumped herself down in the middle of the room with a muttered "*E puākākā te matan!*" (Bad white man!)

"Fine girl, Charley," said the skipper, digging him in the ribs. "Ought to suit you, eh! Make a good little wife."

Negotiations commenced anew. Father willing to part, girl frightened—commenced to cry. The astute Charley brought out some new trade. Tirau's eyes here displayed a faint interest. Charley threw her, with the air of a prince, a whole piece of turkey twill, twelve yards—value three dollars, cost about 2s. 3d. Tirau put out a little hand and drew it gingerly toward her. Tibākāwā gave us an atrocious wink.

"She's cottoned!" exclaimed Charley.

And thus, without empty and hollow display, were two loving hearts made to beat as one. As a practical proof of the solemnity of the occasion, the bridegroom then and there gave Tirau his bunch of keys, which she carefully tied to a strand of her *ridi*, and, smoking one of the captain's Manilas, she proceeded to bash out the mosquitoes from the nuptial couch with a fan. We assisted her, an hour afterwards, to hoist the sleeping body of Long Charley therein; and, telling her to bathe his head in the morning with cold water, we turned to go.

"Good-bye, Tirau!" we said.

"*Tiakapō*,"* said the Good Little Wife, as she rolled up an empty square gin-bottle in one of Charley's shirts for a pillow, and disposed her graceful figure on the floor mats, beside his bed, to fight mosquitoes until daylight.

LOUIS BECKE.

* "Good-night."

"ON THE LAND."

HOT !
A blistering heat, that drove the fowls, with their beaks gaping, off the burning ground into the shelter of the slab hut. A scorching, withering heat, that had made sapless hay of the grass in the paddocks, and reddened the foliage of the gums and the stringy-barks as they would have been reddened by the blaze of a bush-fire. A heat that had sucked up all moisture, and marbled the land with cracks of shrinkage, and turned the waterholes into mere mud-baths ; while the distant creek had nothing but its brown flag-grass and dry swampy bed to show where the water had flowed.

About the homestead, the few cattle still alive hung with their heads stolidly over the slip-rails, refusing, in spite of all driving, to seek again for the sustenance it was impossible to find. The framework of a horse, his head between his legs, and as much in shade as he could get on the lee side of an old ironbark, stood impassive and motionless. All round the horizon, a dirty haze of smoke, that melted into a yellow veil of fog covering the sky.

The sun glared down. The air shimmered tremulously, as though it sickened with its burden. And over all that land not one gleam of freshness, not one sound of joy, not a murmur save the eternal zing-zing-zing of the locust. Seared, blasted, stricken, a curse upon it and upon every living thing.

Abe Saunders was down at what used to be the creek, trying to drag out his last milking cow from the place where she had bogged in a vain effort to find water-grass.

Abe hauled and strained at the rope, his shirt and trousers clinging to him with sweat. The beast kicked and plunged feebly,

its little strength quite gone; and after two hours' work it was more firmly bogged than ever.

"It's no good," said Abe, "I must get help; I'll go up the gully for old Mason and his tackle. If we lose that cow, what will the children do for milk?"

Wearily he turned to go, when the sound of a "Coo-ee!" turned him sharply about.

"Coo-ee!" he shouted.

A little pause, and again the cry echoed.

"Coo-ee!"

"It's Mary," he said; "what the devil's up?" It was a good three miles to the ridge; but, like a wallaby with the dogs in full cry, he sped over rock and gully back to the homestead. Long before he got there, he heard a strange roaring in the air, saw black, belching clouds over the tree tops, and felt a fierce rushing furnace beneath.

The bush was on fire.

With the energy of fear he dashed along. There was the clearing, with Mary at the house-door still shouting at intervals. Even as he came up, the red storm was upon them. In mad frenzy he seized the two children, one under each arm, and shrieking to his wife above the din of the fire to bring the baby, he rushed to the centre of the ploughed paddock. There they crouched panting. The children were howling, the baby was crying, and Mary was sobbing. The man said nothing. He watched the fire.

Would the house escape? There was fifty feet of bare ground all about it. But the air, so calm a minute ago, was now a roaring hurricane travelling at racing speed over the ridge. The tea-tree scrub melted before it, and the bush trees remained in its rear only as black and burning trunks. The fence had caught; the flames licked it up daintily. The shed, with his cart and harness, stood, and was gone, while he looked. A piece of burning stringy-bark, whirled by the wind, settled on the shingles of the house. The woman moaned and pressed the child closer to her bosom. The man's face was drawn in agony.

Week by week, day by day, he had seen the work of his life perish under the merciless sun. The best of his cattle were festering carcasses; his horses were dead, though his last pound had been spent in hay for them. His season's crop was sickly beyond redemption. All this he had borne, and still toiled on in the unequal struggle.

And now the house was burning, the work of his own hands. How many months of weary sawing and splitting had its shingles and slabs cost him? He thought of it all as he stood there, helpless and half-suffocated. In less than a minute the flames were shooting out of the doorways and windows, and a loud report was followed by the fall of a side of the house. It was the explosion of his powder-flask, hung on the wall.

"Can't you put it out, Abe?"

"Put out hell!" And he ground his teeth.

Through the open frame-work they could see the bed, the table, the chairs all blazing one after another. The spirit of the man revolted.

"Look, Mary!" he cried, "there goes the cradle I made for the kids." And as he spoke the aspect of his face changed. The limit of his suffering had come, and, like an old-time victim of the rack, he began to laugh. A hollow laugh, weird and terrible.

"That's a good joke, Mary! The farce is ended—all over in one act! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're mad, Abe!" said his wife, shrinking from him, with a great dread in her eyes. "Don't laugh like that. It's horrible!"

"Mad, my dear! That's good. Ha, ha, ha! Say I've been mad—the most confounded lunatic in this blasted, blistering country. To slog and belt for ten long years to make a home of our own; to clear land, to fence it, drain it, plant it—and all to make five minutes' bonfire! Yes, I've been mad—stark, staring mad; but now—ha, ha, ha!—I was never so sensible in my life!"

"See how the cradle burns, Mary! It was a bit of she-oak, and worked like a watch. Does n't it look pretty now?—they might be silk curtains, all those flounces round it! Why don't you laugh,

girl?—it's a great joke. Look! the roof is falling in. It's as good as fireworks. Hold up the kids; let them laugh! It's all the same price. Ha, ha, ha!"

But the woman replied nothing, frightened, staring at him. The children screamed.

The driving sheet of flame had long gone by. Skirting the ploughed ground where they stood, it had left the bare surface an untouched blank in its ghastly funeral trail. Only tree-stumps, posts, and fallen branches smoked and smouldered here and there. The man stood motionless till nothing remained of his home but the four charred corner-posts.

"Let's see the play out!" he said. "Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

The fire was raging many miles further onward when Abe Saunders, taking the two children by the hand, led the way down the track to the main road. His wife dragged wearily after him, the baby in her arms, looking back from time to time at the smoking ruin.

The group passed on to the road, where the red dust blew in thick, choking clouds that shrouded them from view. But long after they had disappeared there sounded the wail of the children, the moaning of the woman, and loud above all the mirthless laughter of a broken-hearted man.

HENRY FLETCHER.

THE PARSON'S BLACK-BOY.

THE Rev. Joseph Simmondsen had been appointed by his Bishop to a cure of souls in the Far North, in the days when Queensland was an ungodly and unsanctified place. Naturally, the Rev. J., who was young, green, and zealous, saw a direct mission in front of him. His predecessor had never gone twenty miles outside the little seaport that formed the commercial outlet of the district ; but this did not suit Joseph's eager temperament. Once he felt his footing and gained a little experience, he determined on a lengthened tour that should embrace the uttermost limits of his fold.

Now, although beset with the conceit and priggishness inseparable from the early stages of parsonhood, Simmondsen was not a bad fellow, and glimpses of his manly nature would at times peep out in spite of himself. This, without his knowledge, ensured him a decent welcome ; and he got a good distance inland under most favourable auspices, for, the weather being fine, everybody was willing to lend him a horse or drive him along to the next station upon his route. The Rev. Joseph began to think that the roughness of the back country had been much exaggerated.

In due course he arrived at a station which we will call Upton Downs ; beyond it there were only a few newly-taken-up runs. On Upton Downs they were busy mustering, and when the parson enquired about his way for the next day the manager looked rather puzzled. "You see," he said, "we are rather short-handed, and I can't spare a man to send with you ; at the same time the track from here to Gundewarra is not very plain, and I am afraid you might not be able to follow it. However, I will see what I can do."

Mr. Simmondsen was retiring to rest that night when a whispered conversation made itself audible in the next room. No words were distinguishable, but from the sounds of smothered laughter a good joke seemed to be in progress.

"I think I can manage for you," said the manager at breakfast next morning. "When you leave here you will go to Gundewarra, 25 miles. From there it is 35 miles to Bilton's Camp, and 10 on to Blue Grass. From Blue Grass you can come straight back here across the bush, about 40 miles. I will lend you a blackboy who knows the country well and will see you round safely."

The young clergyman thanked his host, and, after breakfast, prepared to leave. The blackboy, a good-looking little fellow arrayed in clean moles and twill shirt, was in attendance with a led pack-horse, and the two departed.

For some miles the Reverend Joseph improved the occasion by a little pious talk to the boy, who spoke fairly good English, and showed a white set of teeth when he laughed, as he constantly did at everything the parson said. At midday they camped for an hour on the bank of a lagoon, in which Mr. Simmondsen had a refreshing swim. In the evening they arrived at their destination, and received the usual welcome.

"I see you adapt yourself to the customs of the country," said his host at mealtime, and a slight titter went round the table. The Rev. Joseph joined in, taking it for granted that his somewhat unclerical garb was alluded to. In reply to enquiries he was informed that Bilton's Camp was a rough place, and Blue Grass even worse; and he was pleased to hear it, for until then his path had been too pleasant altogether; he had n't had a chance to reprove anybody.

Bilton's Camp proved to be indeed a rough place. The men were civil, however, and as the parson had taken another exhilarating bath at the midday camp he appreciated the rude fare set before him; although here, as at the other place, there seemed to be a joke floating about that made everybody snigger.

The next day's journey, to Blue Grass, was but a short stage, and as the reverend gentleman had by this time become very

friendly with Charley, the blackboy, the two rode along chatting pleasantly until they came somewhat unexpectedly on the new camp.

A very greasy cook and two or three gins in dilapidated shirts were the only people at home, and they stood open-eyed to greet the stranger.

Although Mr. Simmondsen had suited his attire to his surroundings, he still retained enough of the clerical garb to signify his profession. The cook, therefore, at once took in the situation, and invited the parson under the tarpaulin which did temporary duty as a hut.

He informed his visitor, at whom he looked rather curiously, that "everyone" was away, camped out, and that no one would return for a couple of days; that he was alone, excepting for two men who were at work in a yard a short distance off, and who would be in to dinner;—in fact, they came up while he was speaking. Mr. Simmondsen took great interest in this, the first real "outside" camp he had seen; and as the two bushmen had gone down to the creek for a wash, and the cook was busy preparing a meal, he called Charley to ask him a few questions.

"What are these black women doing about the place, Charley?"

"O! all about missus belongah whitefellow," was the astonishing reply.

It was some moments before Joseph could grasp the full sense of this communication; then he considered it his duty to read these sinners a severe lecture, and prepared one accordingly.

"Do you not understand," he said, when the three men were together, "the trespass you are committing against both social and Divine laws? If you do not respect one, perhaps you will the other."

The cook stared at the bushmen in blank amazement, and the bushmen at the cook.

"I allude to these unfortunate and misled beings," said the parson, waving his hand towards the half-clad gins.

A roar of laughter was the reply. "Blest if that does n't come well from *you*!" said the cook, when he could speak. The others chuckled in acquiescence.

"What do you mean?" said the indignant Joseph; "I speak by right of my office."

"Sit down and have some tucker," said the cook, "you're not a bad sort, I can see; but don't come the blooming innercent!"

The indignant pastor refused. He saw that his words were treated lightly, that no one would listen to him, and he left in high dudgeon. Charley had told him that there was a good lagoon about twelve miles on the road back to Upton Downs; he would go on there and camp—they had plenty of provisions on the pack-horse—and taking his bridle and calling the boy he went to catch his horse.

As he came back he overheard the fag-end of a remark the cook was making to the others. "They came round the end of the scrub chatting as thick as thieves, and when I seed who it was—Lord! you could have wiped me out with one hand."

This was worse than Greek to the Rev. Joseph. Greek he might have understood. In spite of a humble apology from the delinquent, he departed, and near sundown arrived at the lagoon Charley had spoken of. It was a lovely spot. One end was thick with broad-leaved water-lilies, but there was a clear patch at the other end promising the swim the good parson enjoyed so much.

When the tent was pitched he stood in Nature's garb about to enter the water, when Charley called to him. Pointing towards the lilies, he told Mr. Simmondsen that he would get him some seed-pods which the blacks thought splendid eating. The clergyman had only got up to his waist when he heard a plunge behind him and saw Charley's dark form half splashing, half swimming towards the lilies. Presently his head emerged from a dive, and he beckoned towards the clergyman to come over and taste the aboriginal luxury. The Rev. Joseph paddled lazily over and investigated. The seed-pods proved of very pleasant flavour, and as the sun was nearly down, Mr. Simmondsen wended his way to the bank and emerged in the

shallow water, with Charley a few paces behind him. For some reason he looked back. Shocking predicament! There was no shirking the fact; all the quiet laughter about "the customs of the country," the unexplained allusions, the ribald manner of the cook, were intelligible in a flash. Charley was a woman!

The wicked manager of Upton Downs had started him on his travels with ("after the custom of the country") a black gin dressed in boy's clothes as a valet, and that gin evidently had been recognised by everyone on the road. Mr. Simmondsen thought of the past and blushed. That night was spent in fervent prayer.

"My dear sir," said Davis, the super. of Upton Downs, "I did the best I could for you. Charlotte is as good as any blackboy, and knows all the country round here. Now, own up, did n't she look after you well?"

"You forget the scandal that may arise," said the Rev. Joseph Simmondsen.

"Lord, man! who cares about what is done out here? Nobody will ever hear of it."

Davis was wrong. Everybody did hear of it. The Rev. Simmondsen received indignant letters from his Bishop, his churchwardens, several missionary societies, and, last and worst, a letter of eternal farewell from the young lady to whom he was engaged to be married. Fortunately he inherited some money at the time, so he did the best thing possible—threw up the church, went into squatting, and is now one of the most popular men in this district.

ERNEST FAVENC.



ESTHER.

ESTHER was a frail little girl, with a face so thin and wan that the freckles seemed to have fallen like a merciful veil upon it. She was not pretty. Her hair was too short to plait, not long enough to hang gracefully loose, and its fibre was altogether too contrary for curls. So it hung miserably about her ears, ragged and tattered like the remnant of a flag that might have issued from the fire and smoke of battle.

She was a friendless orphan, which fact made her a born servant to somebody. Old Mrs. MacSmith had secured her services from the State when she first began to toddle on two legs—two legs that soon became bowed under the pots and pans she had to carry in her small arms—and next to her heart.

Thenceforth the MacSmith household was perpetually in a state of war. Her mistress beat her. Esther screamed, and fought fiercely. But Mrs. MacSmith had a duty to perform. So she would grip the little rebel by the windpipe, and call for "Mac." He always came, swift and sure, and the enemy was routed.

Thus, for all the eight years of her life, Esther's existence had been one of screams and pain. She was such a bold, bad girl,—a mere handful, but with a stubborn heart, primed so full of foolish courage that it must surely have burst, were it not for the vent-pipes that relieved the pressure when Esther called people names, and wouldn't work, and scratched the collective face of the MacSmith family with finger-nails kept sharp for that purpose. And she had two other safety-valves to her feelings. One was to laugh hysterically when, for exhibition purposes, she was expected to cry; and the other was to sob heart-breakingly when someone

tried to cheer her with a kind word. Mr. Giles, the parson, once said of her :

“A regular passion-flower, my dear ; but not quite so pretty.” A simile so vague that Esther resentfully poked out her tongue.

The MacSmith family had only one greeting to bestow—“ You little wretch ! ”

The canker grew in Esther's heart. At times, she stole in through the window of the empty cottage next door, and, alone and unobserved, began talking to herself. It was the one little sociable break in her martyrdom.

“ Why don't I die ? ” she asked herself once.

She was eating a green apple. She took another bite, and swallowed it.

“ That's why,” she said. “ Because I'm a greedy-guts.”

And then, after a pause, and looking wistfully at the cold fireplace, she added :

“ Oh, I do wish I did n't eat ! ”

“ Why don't I run away ? ” was the next question.

She waxed violent at this.

“ Because I'm a looney ; and here goes for squashing old Mother MacSmith, anyway.” She brought down the heel of her boot on a large black spider, creeping on the floor.

“ That's forty-three times I've killed her now ! ” she commented, surveying the remains with satisfaction. “ And it was twice a frog, and once a mary-bug.” She laughed shrilly. “ Oh, I'll kill her yet,” she added.

The helpless buzzing of a fly, caught in a spider's web, came from a corner. Esther investigated. She killed the spider, and threw the rescued fly out of the window.

Soon after this the cottage found a tenant. Mr. and Mrs. Mullampy, a pair newly wed, brought in their furniture.

Their honeymoon had been a very nice luminary while it lasted. The cheers of their friends, and the rice, and the proverbial old

shoe, had given them entrance to married life with quite a violent propulsion. But the law of gravitation told, and they slowed down. Then the rainbow lost the glory of its tints; the mantle of chimney-smoke fell on their air-castles; and they themselves came right down to the bed-rock of the prosaic. When they could n't get down any further they commenced to argue. Then the price of meat went up; the milkman began to call regularly; and married life on a solid basis had begun.

Esther took a great interest in their arguments. Tiptoeing her way on to the very threshold of the Mullampys' kitchen at meal-time, she would listen attentively. And she learnt many things. She found that she was not the only unhappy person in the world. Once she saw the husband lift his hand to strike his wife. "Don't!" Esther screamed. The hand was arrested. Esther ran away.

After that, the child's presence came to be one of the subconscious details of their domestic dramas. Nor did they resent it. In their inmost hearts they felt that Esther's shadow, falling athwart the doorway, was to them Love's decoy-bird, a creature swaying them with such a strange influence that more than once the man was tempted to crush his pride and call the child in to plead for a kiss with the woman he really loved. And the woman, being weaker, could not keep the pain out of her eyes. Yet she, too, was very proud.

Often, in the midst of bitter recrimination, the husband would suddenly stop short and glance fearfully at the door. Esther's ragged head would pop quickly back, and the man, with increased colour, would get up awkwardly from the table and vanish through the opposite doorway.

On one of these occasions, when the husband had left the room, Esther dropped something heavily on the floor. Mrs. Mullampy looked up from the table, and her visitor, looking very red and guilty, advanced towards her. In one hand, which hung limp and passive by her side, a large horse-shoe dangled.

"Whatever do——"

"Please, don't; I know I'm wicked."

"What's that for?" Mrs. Mullampy pointed at the horse-shoe.

"'Cos if I don't tell no lies I won't go to heaven," said Esther, a little mixed, and trying to nerve herself, in a roundabout way, for a momentous admission. She drew a long breath.

"*To brain him with*, please!" she said.

"Who?"

"*Him*. 'Cos he wanted to hit you."

Mrs. Mullampy looked at her in silence for a while. Esther hated to be pitied. She gave her head a proud toss, calculated to change the compassionate expression of the woman's eyes.

"I hate him!" she said, spitefully. She tossed her head again. This time two gum-leaves and a twig dropped from her tangled hair to the floor.

"My dear child!" the woman said, softly.

Esther's lip quivered. Then she thought of the spider she had killed on the very spot where she was standing. The recollection made her more cheerful. Mrs. Mullampy picked up the horse-shoe.

"Would you hit *me* with this, Esther?" she asked.

The child shook her head.

"Well, then, don't hit *him*! If you do, you'll hit me."

Esther's mouth opened wide.

"'Tain't a boomerang like Joe MacSmith's," she said, sharply.

Mrs. Mullampy made an impatient gesture. She bit her lip, as though restraining an exclamation.

"You don't understand," she said.

A sweet temptation came over her, and she lifted the child on to her knees, and with all the patience of a loving teacher commenced to explain. She outpoured the long pent-up secrets of her heart to Esther. Anon a querulous note crept into her voice—a compromise of sweet and bitter—a woman's sense of being wronged struggling with the unreasoning vagaries of a forgiving heart.

Esther was not listening. Once or twice she fancied she heard

Mrs. MacSmith's voice calling her from the next yard. She was tired of sitting on Mrs. Mullampy's knee. The shrill cry of her mistress rang out unmistakably now. She felt uneasy.

"Let me down, please."

"Don't go yet, Esther!" the woman pleaded, "I want to say something."

But Esther had reached the door.

Mrs. Mullampy, after all, was little more than a girl herself. The romantic story and the coy admissions seemed to linger about every ornament in the room when the child had gone. A china peacock over the mantel-piece, with tail outspread, repeated distinctly, she thought, her own words:

"I love him, Esther!"

And the voice of that peacock overwhelmed her. She sat aghast. Then slowly, like an apple ripening in an hour, her cheeks grew red. She snatched at the tablecloth and buried her face in it, like a school-girl trying to hide her blushes.

Esther had not gone. She cautiously peeped round the doorway. The horse-shoe was dangling with one end poked through a tear in her skirt. She could n't keep her thoughts off that spider. She was tracing with her eyes the different routes it might have taken if she had not intercepted it. Her conjectures brought her glance to the corner door. It was ajar, and she saw Mr. Mullampy looking at his wife through the opening. And she saw Mrs. Mullampy start and cry out when she uncovered her head and found her husband standing beside her.

"Jane," he said, softly, "I heard all. Forgive me!"

The woman was too happy to trust herself yet. With the blind instinct of her sex, which always makes a show of flying in the face of Fate, however friendly it may be, she pretended to be angry at being found out.

"Oh," she said pettishly, "it's all Esther's fault. She made me say it."

"Then God bless Esther!" said the man.

The girl had run round the back way, and was peeping through the window. She saw them kiss. The woman's arms were round the man's neck.

Then Esther began to cry. She felt that she alone was miserable and unhappy.

"I've a good mind to throw it," she said, raising the horse-shoe threateningly. "Only I can't hit him without hitting her."

"Anyway, for luck!" she added, throwing it over her left shoulder. It fell heavily on a stray fowl belonging to Mrs. MacSmith. Esther clapped her hands in glee.

Then she took a farewell peep through the window, and that which she saw, whatever it was, made her say :

"Crikey !"

J. J. O'MEARA.



BILL'S YARN: AND JIM'S.

I.—BILL'S YARN.

“**Y**OU don't believe in 'em?” said Bill. “I did n't, either—one time. But if ever you see one—like I did—and you lose your girl through it—like I did—you'll believe in 'em right enough, I promise you!”

“Did the girl see it too, Bill?”

“My word.”

“Were you scared?”

“Was I scared! Would you be scared if you saw six foot long of ghost coming at you?”

“Tell us about it, Bill.”

“Well, mind you, this is a true yarn, and you'd better make up your minds there's nothin' funny in it. And there's nothin' to laugh at in it, either. So, if any of you fellows wants to laugh, he'd better start now, and we'll go outside an' see whether he can give me a hidin' or I can give him one. Lend's a match.” And Bill lit his pipe.

We promised Bill that we would take his yarn seriously, because we could see he would be annoyed if we didn't, and Bill scales 12st. 13lb.

“They was havin' races at Bogalong,” said Bill, “at the pub. And there was a little girl working there that I was shook on, name of Mary—Mary—darned if I don't forget her other name. Now, that's curious, too! Mary—well, no matter. Never mind her other name. But I thought a lot of that girl those days. There was a jockey, though, named Joe Chanter, and I always thought he was the white-headed boy with Mary, and I had no show. But she was only stringing him on, after all. Only Joe never found it out. He was ridin' a colt for the publican this day

in the Maiden, and the colt bolted and ran into a fence and chucked Joe, and they picked him up with his face stove in and his neck broke. He was n't a bad sort, Joe; a long, slim chap he was—tall as me, but thin—some of you chaps might ha' knowed him? No? Lend's a match.

"Mary did n't seem much cut-up over the accident, though she was keeping the other women company in howlin' most of the afternoon. But all the women cheered up a bit after supper, and it was decided not to put off the dance at night, because there was a great crowd there, and the publican said it did n't matter about Joe—Joe would n't mind. Landlord was thinking about what he'd lose, you see, if they broke up the party. So they cleared the kitchen, and the fiddles played up, and at it they went. Now, I never was much of a dancer, and Mary was n't dancin', either; she was helpin' in the bar; so I went in and talked to her instead. By-and-by I got her to come away and sit in the best parlour with me.

"There was nobody there, and we sat down on the sofa, and got a bit confidential, and she said, when I asked her was n't she shook on Joe, 'No, indeed, not on Joe.' There was somebody else—she said. I asked her who was he? She says, 'A lot you care!' 'Indeed I do care a lot, Mary,' I says. 'I don't believe you care anything at all about me,' she says, half crying. 'Why,' I says, 'Mary, you ought to know' (an' she did know, too, only she was foxin') 'that there's nobody in all the world I do care about except you.' Then she began to say something, out could n't get it out for crying, an' I cut in. 'Don't you know, Mary, that I love you?' 'I don't know,' says she. 'Well, I do, then,' I says, 'more than anything else in the whole world. Tell me, do you like me a little? (I got that out of a book I'd been readin'. Sounds silly rot, doesn't it? Lend's a match.)

"'Yes, I do, Bill,' says she, 'and I never liked anyone else.' Well, then, of course you know what a fellow'll do when a girl talks that way, and they're by themselves. By the Lord, boys, it was a treat to kiss that girl. She was just an armful of loveliness. Funny thing I can't think of her name. The music was going it

out at the back all the time, and they were dancin' away no end. Presently Mary says she'd have to go; she might be wanted; and, of course, I said she'd have to give me another kiss before she went. And she was just doin' it, when, all of a sudden, she turns white an' says—

“ ‘Oh, Bill, how wicked we are!’ ”

“ ‘Why, Mary,’ says I, ‘what’s wicked about this lot?’ ”

“ ‘Just think, Bill,’ she says, ‘here we are, talkin’ love and kissing, an’ poor Joe Chanter lyin’ dead in the very next room!’ ”

“ ‘Great Scott!’ says I; ‘is he?’ and then Mary began to cry and laugh both together like, but she was hardly started when I hears an almighty bump on the floor in the next room, and then we both looks up, and there was Joe! He was standing at the door, wrapped up in his windin’-sheet, and his face was covered with blood. Mary gave one yell and ran out by the other door, and me after her, like blazes! Scared? Now, would n’t that ha’ scared you? Lend’s a match.”

“ Well, and what *was* it, Bill? ”

“ Great Scott, ain’t I tellin’ you! It was *Joe*! Can’t a man trust his own flamin’ eyesight? ”

“ And what happened after? ”

“ Nothin’. Joe was dead enough when the rest came in and looked, and they would n’t believe what I told ’em. Only Mary would n’t look at me next day—seemed frightened like—so I came away. I’ve never been to Bogalong since.”

We all thought Bill’s yarn a very unsatisfactory one, yet we could n’t get any more out of him. But six months afterwards I heard Jim’s yarn.

II.—JIM’S YARN.

“ BOGALONG? ” said Jim. “ Yes, I’ve been there, and I don’t want to go there any more. It was a bit funny, though, all the same. Oh, all right, I’ll tell you all about it.

“ I’d just delivered a mob of stores at Pilligi, and as I was comin’ back, I made Bogalong about dusk. I thought I might as

well be a swell for once, havin' a bit of stuff, so I reckoned I'd stay at the pub. all night. So I put my horse up, and had a drink, and asked if I could have a bed. But the place was full up—they'd been havin' races that day—and they said there was no bed for me, so I was goin' away. But the publican called me back—I s'pose he guessed I had a cheque on me—and said he'd find room for me somewhere. 'There's a double bed,' says he, 'if you don't mind sharin' it with another man. He's a very quiet fellow,' he says; 'I'll answer for him not disturbing you.' So I said all right, and after I had a few more drinks I went to bed. They had a dance on, but I was n't in the humour for dancin', for it was a hot night, and I was tired.

"The other fellow must ha' been that way, too, I thought, for he was in bed already, I saw, when I went in. I did n't take much notice of him, except that he seemed pretty well covered up, for such a hot night. But after I put the light out, an' lay down, I found that I'd have to cover up, too, or else the mosquitoes would eat me. So I pulled the sheet off the cove an' rolled it round myself, and went to sleep. But the noise of the music and the dancin' woke me up after a bit, and I lay awake, growlin' a bit to myself for a time, an' I was just goin' off again, when I heard someone talkin' in the next room. I had left the door open, an' could hear quite plain. I was goin' to sing out to them to clear out, or shut the door, or something, but when I heard what they were sayin', I thought it was too good to miss, so I listened.

"It was some fellow doin' a mash with a girl, and I could n't help laughin' to myself to think how mad he'd be if he knew somebody was listening. He was pretty solid with the girl, I could tell, and by-and-by he started kissin' her, an' I nearly burst myself laughin' when that began, and he called her sweetheart, and darling, and all that. I was goin' to wake up my mate, and let him share the fun, but I thought they might hear me, so I lay very quiet, until presently the girl says, 'Oh, Bill! and poor Joe lyin' dead in the very next room!'

"I shoves out my hand as quick as lightning, and feels

for my mate's face, and--Great Lord! it was as cold as a snake!

" 'Holy Wars!' I says, and I gives one bound out of bed, forgetting all about the sheet bein' wrapped round my legs. I came down an awful buster, and my nose hit the side of the bed, and started to bleed like a waterspout. But I picked myself up and made for the door, and then I saw the fellow and the girl sitting together on the sofa. They had one look at me—I was still rolled up in the sheet, and the blood was running down my face—and then they cleared. By Jove they did travel! I got my clothes on—I did n't much care about going in for them, though—and went out to the stable and got my horse and took the road for it, and went on to Blind Creek, and camped there.

"But you 'd ha' laughed to see how them two footed it!"

A. CHEE.



THE BOND.

INTO the deserted waiting-room, where the evening shadows were deepening, a woman came with a slow, uneven footstep. She was the last patient but one, and even as she crossed the threshold she heard the door of the doctor's consulting-room close behind the final case for the day, and knew that already she had faded out of the busy man's mind.

She was only one of many, and her case was not even an individual one. Daily such conditions as hers came under the doctor's notice, and he forgot her before she had passed out into the hall.

Her fine grey eyes were dazed ; her beautiful mouth, made to curve so graciously, drooped with the flabby movement by which great misery alters the firmest, sweetest lips.

In that little room down the passage a hard blow had fallen on her, and she sank trembling into a chair and held her hands to her eyes. Dream buds, so tenderly, so carefully loved and nurtured, had been shrivelled to death in a bitter wind. Fair-winged hopes were dashed to the ground, their wings broken, and all flying stopped for ever.

She had been told that she never could be a mother.

And at home—that fair home of hers—was the husband, who often had dreamed away to her longingly of the little bright-faced child with shining hair, and eyes of the purest blue, who was to walk beside him some day, and whisper to him tender child-things with her hand in his.

"It must be a little girl." How often he had said it !

"A little girl, because she will be like you."

And they even talked about her name—this little being whose

coming had never been heralded. The mother called her Star-Baby; the father, little Annie, for that was the mother's name, and there could be none better.

And had there been anyone to listen, he would have thought their child was already with them, a real, living little one. Their lips were always lingering round its name. . . . "I must bring the little one something in my pocket to-night." . . . "We must never let little Annie pull the cat's whiskers, as these children are doing." . . . "I should like to buy baby a doll's perambulator, like that little girl's."

And sometimes the mother would go on tiptoe to the bedside, and bend down and whisper, "She is fast asleep." And the father, not to be outdone in this fond, foolish, primeval tenderness, would say, "I think I hear her calling 'Daddy!'"—and he would come back presently and say, "The little girl was frightened of the dark."

Father! Mother! Never, never could it be!

Her heart sickened at the thought of her husband. To her a grief, a sadness that would shadow all her life. To him it would be an anguish that would turn all his future into Dead-Sea fruit.

He was a man born to be a father. Every child loved him and came slowly, hesitatingly as children will, but always surely, to his side. He had the indescribable art of making conversation with children. He talked to them as if they were as old as he, and that is what wins the little hearts.

They had been married now two years, and for one the world had held no one but themselves—he for her only, she for God in him. It was in the second year she learned of his longing for a little life he would love to join to theirs.

Then all the latent motherhood in her sprang to flame, and burnt with a bright, ever-deepening glow that sent a warmth over heart and brain, and changed the whole aspect of life. Self began to dwindle, dwindle. The rush of love flowed over everything that had life—her plants and flowers, and birds and dogs;—the mystery of their birth awoke strange thrills in her heart, and their helplessness brought the wonderful bud of maternity into fuller, lovelier

bloom. Out of love sprang love, and all the waifs and strays of the world were touched with this tide of mother tenderness. She could hardly believe it was she, herself, who felt so. She had never known that she would care for children. Every woman loves to hold a baby and kiss the helpless hands and feet, and that had been all the extent of her love for children until then.

And now it was all over.

"I saw a tiny thing to-day, just like little Annie," he was saying.

They were sitting alone on their verandah that looked over a rose-garden towards the sea. Dusk was falling, and here and there the light of a coasting steamer gleamed far out on the Pacific.

"Did you, dear?" she forced herself to answer. A week, and she had not told him. A subtle change had come over the brightness of her face; in the depths of her eyes lurked weariness.

"Her father was a working man."

"You were glad of that; you were able to give her one of your endless pennies."

"You're a witch. I own I never see these little things without wanting to give them something, and she was so tiny, and had just *her* fair curls."

For they had often looked, in dreams, on the face of their little one; they knew every line and curve, every light and shade of the little features.

He came and flung himself at her side, and leaned his head against her knee. He reached up for her hand, and brought it to rest on his head.

"Big Annie," he whispered.

"Yes," she whispered back to him, and tried to keep the pain out of her voice.

"Do you know what I was thinking? . . . I love you—truest, dearest woman—I love you. . . . You seem to me to be more and more beautiful every day. . . . But sometimes, girl, sometimes we are a little lonely. . . . We are not enough for each other. I look

forward and see a time when we might—might care for each other a little less, and then a little less. . . . But the time will never come. . . . That is why I want the little one so much. Did I hurt you?"

"A little. . . . You might tire of me—might love me less."

"Never, never. It is impossible. But it must be born in me to love a child, and I am stunted until then. Then I shall love you doubly, trebly, a thousand times more dearly."

"But, they say," she murmured—and this was the poor little one straw she had been clinging to so desperately the whole week past—"they say that a childless man and woman love each other more dearly than those who are fathers and mothers. Their love retains its early freshness—is a truer comradeship. They are all in all to each other, for there is no one to divide their hearts with."

"That may be true of some, not of us—not of you, not of me. She will be the great, enduring, eternal bond, the only bond that can never weaken."

Like a child himself, he whispered against her knee that he longed so for the little arms to be round his neck, for the little cheek to be against his; that he yearned to carry her about from room to room in his arms, to buy her dollies, and little baby toys. . . .

She thought her heart would break.

To the old pain, the week-old pain, that seemed to have begun whole centuries before, there was now a new one added. He could contemplate the time when he might tire of her.

Next, the pain would come when he had tired of her.

"Tired of her" was an ugly phrase. It was not quite what he meant. She knew he was hers in some stronger bond than charm or beauty.

But the atmosphere of his love would soon be too still and silent for him; the beauty of it would jar when the longing for the little arm was strong on him. Then he would look at her critically,

coldly, and wonder why her presence there no longer filled the rooms with radiance and a sense of rest.

Day by day she lost her brightness, her quick capacity for laughter and warm responsiveness. Thought grew leaden with turning round and round in the one small place. There were cruel moments when her secret bit her like the Spartan's fox, but she smiled and forced herself to play her part—the part that some day must inevitably be disclosed as hollow.

She forced herself to wander with him through all his tender imaginings; she made herself respond to every scheme for the little one's happiness.

"When she is old enough we will take her to Italy, to Paris. How old ought she to be?"

"We will take her when she is eight."

Life altered again. A new revolution, and she saw that for herself she could bow to this blow, and some day even kiss the hand that dealt it. Her eyes had been opened, and selfishness, which is blindness, never could return. The mother-love that had been given to her so lavishly need never be wasted while the world stretched out around her, hungering everywhere for love.

But her husband had gathered the little one in his arms so often that he almost believed she was there, blue-eyed and sunny-haired, with a mouth like a clover for sweetness. To know that such a child was never to be born to them would be more bitter than to have Death take her from his arms.

Down she went to the brink of the grave, playing the part gaily, tenderly all the while. Wondering with him how soon the good God would let them know of little Annie's coming, whispering to his whisper that the cling of the little arms was the sweetest thing in all the world.

And only on the grave's brink, with Death staring like a hungry wolf into her face, and her heart too torn and wounded almost to resist, she told him.

"There never can be any little Annie."

And she told him she had known it many months. Told him that the knowledge, and the thought of the chasm that was to divide their lives, had been slowly killing her. Everything she laid bare to him,—all her pitiful little mockeries, her tender, sad deceits.

Then she was ready to turn away and die. But the hungry wolf had seen the agony in the man's face, and fled, knowing its time was not yet.

There, at her side, was the child for whom her mother-love might flow, this broken-hearted man, her husband.

LOUISE MACK.



COLLOP'S MOTHER.

HE was an ancient mariner, and of the old school, a fellow-passenger on s.s. *Hauroto*, Auckland to Sydney. We foregathered, refreshed together (he did n't take water in his), and subsequently conversed of many things—the way to set a foretopmast stun'sail ship-shape and Bristol fashion, religion, the superiority of sail to steam, education, blackbirding (he had been there), and, lastly, filial affection.

"I ain't wot you'd call religious," he remarked, "but I believes in a religious eddication. I don't hold with this yer new-fangled sekkilar system. I've knocked about promiscuous, an' I says early religious trainin' is a first-chop thing. As for what you calls filliul affeckshun, I don't take no stock much in fathers—mine brought me up on holystone and rope's-end, dern him!—but no chap's any good onless he's allfired fond of his mother. You take it from me."

I acquiesced.

"Did you ever come across Bob Collop—Captain Collop, that is?" he asked, with seeming irrelevance.

I intimated that I had not the voluptuous pleasure of Mr. Collop's acquaintance.

"Well, he's a runnin' down to the Islands just now, in the Martha and Emily schooner. Years ago me and him was sailin' our own schooners on the Chineese coast, Ningpo to Shanghai. Lots of Australian chaps was on that lay then. Well, Collop he was an axample of early pious trainin' an' filliul affeckshun, an' no bloomin' error. No, there wasn't many as could touch Collop!"

I hinted that a recital of the manifold virtues of Collop

might prove a means of grace to myself. And this was the story of Collop—his piety and filial affection :—

My name's Joful—John Joful. Collop was a saint, if ever was one. But you understand me, he was no God-forgot teetotaller. There were n't any—not at sea, at least—them days. He'd take his tot reg'lar and his religion didn't show out startling, only about once every four months, when he said he'd got a letter from his poor old mother in Sydney. I never seed the letters, but I knowed when he had one, for he'd go off on a reg'lar religious rampage, so to speak. We would be lyin' in the river and one of his China sailors'd come aboard my craft with his teeth a-chatterin' and pig-tail a-stickin' out straight, and say :

“Claptin'; you klum makee see Collop; he catchee one piecee chopee ffrom his old muddee; he makee too much bobeelee, go lah!”

Then I'd know Collop was took bad with piety and filliul thingummy. I'd take my boat and six Manila-men and a few fathom o' new nine-thread, and pull for Collop's hooker. Afore we reached her we'd hear the firing; we'd pull straight down ahead, so's he could n't spot us coming, for he'd be posted on the companion-ladder, half up and half down, with a loaded old smooth-bore a-restin' on the hatch, and with no dunnage on him particular and his hair a-flyin' loose in the breeze, and him six foot four, bare feet, and a fine figger of a man, and a-patiently waitin' till something alive showed so's he could shoot at it. He misliked heathen drefful when these pious fits was on him—bless you! he'd shoot a Chinaman, or a Malay, or a Manila-man, or a Lascar, or a buck nigger he suspicioned was n't Christianised, whenever he'd heard from his poor old mother. That's how his what-d'ye-call-it affeckshun and early trainin' come out. But it showed the nat'ral religion and goodness as was in him—did n't it, now?

I'd fasten my painter to his anchor-chain, tell my Manila-men to stand by, shin up and sing out loud, “All right, Collop, don't fire! it's only me, Joful!” And I'd dodge for'ard of the foremast

till I'd drawed his fire ; then I'd up stick and get aft, alongside of him, afore he could load.

He was always glad to see me, and he'd go on loading, so 's to be ready for anything as moved. I'd say :

"Had a letter, Collop, old ship?"

He'd bust a-cryin' and say :

"Yes, Joful—a letter from my poor old mo-mother, as taught me piety when I was an innercent nipper at her knee."

And he'd catch sight of some pagan heathen a-hidin' behind a water-butt and—*bang*! 'd go his gun, and as he'd run the rod through her he'd cry gently to hisself and say :

"Missed that yaller thief, Joful. Yes, Joful, it was my poor old mother as taught me all the goodness as I knows. And I gets a letter from her to-day, a beautiful letter, full of hymns and tex's and"—

Then he'd slip, maybe, two bullets in.

"When I was a little, little kid a-dressed in my little velvet coat and lace, and my innercent little drawers with frills on 'em, she'd fold my hands and teach me"—

Bang! would go his old gun again, and he'd say quite sad and solemn :

"Another inch to the left, Joful, and I'd a hit that fat-headed Chinese *lowdah* that don't know the difference between sou'-east and nor'-west—he don't, as you're a sinner, Joful, which you know you are, and a drunkard, which the same is cursed in the Book!"

An' byemby he'd let her rip again.

"Oh! Joful, you ain't got religion; you can never know what it is to me." And he'd fill her a quarter up with powder.

"Religion's all I have left; but I'm at peace, at peace with all men. Shove up that 300-yard sight for me, Joful! There's something in that lorch's riggin'. 'Pears to me it's one of them Goa Portugese. Sinful Roman Catholics they are, them Goa men!"

And after he'd fired that shot, and missed—which he did frequent—I'd let a whoop out o' me, and my Manila-men'd come swarming over the bows, and we'd run round and round poor

Collop with the nine-thread, till we 'd tangle his legs and throw him, and a awful gay time we 'd have, that 's a fact. We 'd bowse him below and lash him to his bunk, and take away all his guns an' pistols an' razors an' carving knives, an' I 'd sit alongside him and feed him with big spoons of brandy or squareface, and talk to him about his good old mother or read chice parts of Scriptor—Jonah and the whale, and Paul's voyages, and all about the Ark, and Lot and the promises, an' in two or three days these yer religious exercises, and a little opium as I give him, 'd pull him round.

But it showed—did n't it?—the effeck of early religious eddication ; because, you see, he always fired on them occasions with *ball*, whereas if he 'd a-had no proper teachin' he 'd 've loaded with *shot*, and that 'd 've scattered and hit something. It was just his mother's lessons.

One night in Ningpo, he 'd 'ad one of them letters and was flamin' bad. He came nigh killin' the lot of us. The third day he says, sudden :

"Joful, old blowhard, I 'd like to see a parson afore I die !"

"You ain't as bad as that, Bob Collop ?" I says.

"Joful," he answers, "fetch me a sky-pilot afore I die."

Well, he was drefful weak and extra pious that morning, and I felt as if the angel of thingumybob was aboard. I sends a boy down to the mission-station—'Merican Methodees, they was—to say as how Captain Collop was a-dyin', an' to send a proper certificated sky-pilot—not a mud-hobbler—and, maybe, some physic. Towards sundown Collop got worse. Says I to myself : "You 're a-goin' out with the tide, a-ebbin' with the ebb, Bob Collop, that 's what 's the matter with you, an' it 's spring tides at that."

Byemby a *sampan* sculls alongside, an' in it a missionary cove—a little chap with a white 'elmet size of the bunt of a ship's mains'l, and a rumberella set. Says he, very 'aughty and fierce :

"Is this the Wanderer, my good man ?"

"You bet," says I.

"Why is n't there a proper ladder rigged for me?" he says like a hadmiral.

Finally we hoisted him on deck, and I p'inted to where the dyin' man were; but when I wants to explain—to prepare him for Collop and Collop for him—he pushes me aside sayin' we men was all the same, a lot of drunken brutes. And down he goes, stiff and grand.

I looked down arter him; there was Collop, as I reckoned dyin', standin' in the cabin, smilin' beautiful.

The little chap was very rough with poor Collop, orderin' him around like as if he was a Christian converted Chinkie, and disremembering as Collop was master mariner, and he was only four foot odd, and Collop six foot and inches. An' when Collop begins talkin' about his poor old mother the little Methodee says:

"I don't want to 'ear that rubbidge. Pay me ten dollars, then I'll give you some medicine."

Collop's face turned kinder queer, but he planks the dollars, and the missionary he lugs out three powders in white paper, and says, a-curlin' his nose:

"You'll take one of these now, one at eight, and one if you can't sleep."

Says Collop—soft as a sou'-east trade:

"*Which* will I take *now*? I'll take 'em for my poor old mother's sake."

"You stupid, maudlin fellow, never mind your mother! You take one if you can't sleep, one at eight, and one now."

Collop he smiled a faded smile and asks, poetical: "Mate, *which* will I take at eight?"

"This man's an idiot," says the missionary.

"*Which* will I take if I can't sleep?" asks Collop, sweet as East India sugar. "Boss," he goes on, "I'd like to own a sky-pilot all to myself. What would a gent of your figger take an' sign articles to be my regular chaplain?"

"This fellow's drunk *and* a fool," says the other, heavin' his eyes aloft.

An' I see his 'and (Collop's 'and) go softly, slowly behind him, and afore I could move Collop's arm comes round dragging a great rug from off his bunk, and quicker 'n you could splice the mainbrace he had dumped the gospel-grinder in the centre of that blanket—white 'at, rumberella and all—and then he catches hold of the four corners, and ties up the parson inside just as you ties up dirty clothes for the *dhobie* to take to wash. Then he h'ists the bundle on the cabin table, and as he sees me a-comin' he just out a revolver as he 'ad 'id somehow and says solemn :

"No yer don't, Joful, unless you 're weary, and then I will give you rest. Scriptor, don't yer know." I saw he meant shoot, and so I waited.

He turns to the bundle of missionary, opens the mouth of the blanket an inch or so, and says to what was inside :

"Chook ! Chook ! Chook !" Like as if he'd a chicken in there. Then he says, "You 're my chaplain !"

Then he made his chaplain take all them three powders, and orders :

"Chaplain, pray for me !"

An' the little chap begins to pray like mad, but whether for hisself or Collop I could n't make out. After a time Collop peeps into the parcel again an' orders :

"Pray for my poor old mother, chaplain !"

He prayed.

"Sing a hymn, chaplain !"

He sang.

"Preach me a sermon, chaplain. Lots o' 'ell-fire in it, please."

He preached.

But by-an'-by Collop would call him to prayers less frequent, and, at last, his head falls back an' he dosses off like a tired hinfant. Down I dives, chucks the pistol through the port, out knife, an' cuts the little gent adrift, an' such a holy mix you never did see. I gives him a stiff second-mate's nip—four fingers up, believe me—an' passes the little creature into his *sampan*.

Next mornin' Collop wakes up, fresh as paint. "A just man

made perfeck am I, Joful, you drunken old sinner!"—that 's wot he says.

But it all showed the goodness of his heart, an' the good of early pious trainin' an' the infloocene of his mother—did n't it now? Because, you know, if Collop had n't a had them yer things, he'd 'ave killed that missionary—what do you say? But not he, not Collop. He just made that little cove pray and preach for him like the Levide 'n the good Sammarium in the book.

But there is one thing as puzzles me worse nor lograthims; Collop did n't really have them letters from his mother; because he did n't have no mother; because he was a Sydney foundling—they picked him up, a babby, in a newspaper where Riley-street is now. Old Captain Slumley's wife took him and eddicated him with a rolling-pin; an' Slumley—cussing Slumley, they called him—did n't have no religion, nor she, except rum. Anyway, Collop was true pious, and full of what-d'ye-call-it affeckshun and all that, and an axample to the derved young sekkilar larrikins as is box-hauling and buckin' and fillin' about Sydney now.

Let 's have a tot, a soldier's supper and turn in.

J. EVISON.



A BUSH TANQUERAY.

THE coach creaked round a path hewn out of the grey sandstone, leading to the road that ran white and bare over the summit of a hill. The driver pulled up. Away down in the smoke-laden hollow a number of men gathered and sent up a faint cheer. Then a shirt of many colours, supported by yellow moleskin trousers, rose solemnly from the box-seat and made some parabolic gestures in return. The driver touched his leader tenderly on the flank, and the coach wound through lichen-covered boulders into a dingy mulga background. Simultaneously the crowd below adjourned to the public-house. A mottle-faced old whaler peeped in at the door to remark, for the fifth time, that "water was bad, and the road too stinkin' for anything." No one noticed him until, pressed by a great thirst, he hazarded another cast of the die:

"Anybody want to 'ear a song—a real blanky song without funny business? Ever 'eard 'When Molly marries the Ringer'? I'd sing 'Billy the Bound'ry,' only I'm gone in the 'igh notes through sleepin' in the wet without a bluey."

A derisive, withering reply sent him hobbling to the kerb to examine further the grey ridges that bounded an everlasting plain, and the question of his life—the road. Conversation in the bar turned upon Benjamin Stokes, the man who had just left by coach for Sydney. Everybody admitted that Ben was too reserved and sullen. In the first place, his life had been spent beyond the enlightening influence of his fellow-townsmen, in long night-watches with stamping herds and vicious colts. "And the result," said Tackler, the school-master, "is a product as rough as Nature, his god. Gentlemen," continued Tackler, seizing a gin-and-peppermint, "the man Stokes is a heathen idolater."

And Mottle-face went lamely over the hill, his tattered clothes flapping weirdly through a vista of white dust.

Ben's trip was to last a month, and each week of his absence was duly notched off on the post outside the pub. When the notches grew to ten, and he did not return, the circumstance was referred to in the *Deep Creek Watchman*.

Ben had never seen a train before; his ideas of city life had been drawn from the rough word-pictures of bushmen. The cause of his prolonged absence was explained in the first page of his new pocket-book—

Stoping two Teath, one ginny. Millysent Lee—cab—Mattry-monial agenc, 3£. 2s. 6d.

One afternoon the coach dropped them at the door of a hut near the creek. The driver shook hands with Ben, winked at Ben's wife, and flogged his horses over the wooden bridge to the township. They stood watching the coach till attention was claimed by a tabby cat which brought out several blind kittens for inspection. Her sinful pride led to painful consequences, for a few minutes later the anxious mother mewed piteously near the tank, while Benjamin did strange things with her blind offspring in a bucket of water.

Millicent threw herself wearily on a biscuit-box and slowly took out her hat-pins. The room was stuffy and dark; the tiny window and the little tin mirror filled her with profound astonishment. In a corner was a narrow bed that met the requirements of a long single man, and its presence plainly indicated that the whole wedlock business was unpremeditated. A sporting print on the wall depicted "Jimmy the Biff" going sweet and fresh after ten hard rounds with "Mick the Nipper" from Bendigo.

Through a large hole in the wall near the fire-place Ben apologised for the speckled condition of the nuptial chamber—due, he explained, to the goats and fowls. By-and-by he might nail up the hole with a bag; it was getting too big. Some night an enterprising cow would squeeze through and breathe over a married

couple—he'd nail it up now. He rushed away, and there were sounds of a man chopping wood.

The next day was Sunday. Ben took out a concertina from the hollow log where it had lain for weeks; and, tucking it under his arm, stole down to the creek bend, where the belt of coolabahs would hide his musical proceedings from Mill. He began to wonder if she were really fond of music. Anyhow, he would practise a bit before submitting anything to her judgment. She had lived all her life in swell boarding-houses where the aristocracy sat down to the piano and gave it what for. He reckoned that Mill would be very hard to please; still, a concertina was as good as a piano, and if he could only get hold of a few rattling tunes he'd spring 'em on her suddenly—he'd go marching up the track swinging his instrument over his head and filling the bush with an imitation of cathedral bells. His mother used to say he had a grand forehead for music. He looked back over his shoulder to see if Mill were watching him from the door. A screw of smoke trailed from the tiny chimney, winding like a scarf across the roof of the bush.

How different the country seemed since he had returned! The blazed eucalypt that had always reminded him of a crucified man looked quite cheerful; the cattle were in better condition; the very atmosphere held some hidden witchery that set him aglow as if he had drunk wine from the billy instead of tea.

He sat on a boulder hugging his concertina. The coming of this grey-eyed town-girl would change his life. There had been times when he used to sit alone clasping his knees and smoking until he felt sick and giddy. People said he was sulkier than a calf. Yet there were hundreds of lads who lived as he had lived, with the unresponsive bush for a mistress and slaving, red-eyed cattle for comrades.

The first few notes from his concertina seemed to wake the morning stillness; a couple of inquisitive magpies chortled back melodiously as if defying the big sun-tanned stripling to out-clamour them.

He rose suddenly and pitched a stone in their direction. "Go way, yer bloomin' cadgers! yous sneak about when yous ain't wanted. Gerrout!"

"*Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho!*"

A kingfisher sailed over the hut roof and settled on the lower branch of a gum.

"*Ho, ho, ho!*"

The savage, insulting laughter cracked discordantly along the hollow.

For a moment the hot blood swam in Ben's cheeks; the same bird had shed laughter a thousand times over his hut, but never till now had he felt how closely the cackle resembled the fierce mockery from a human throat.

When he returned Mill was clearing out the garnered litter of his bachelor days—leaky, rust-eaten billies, old boots and bridle straps, fearsome pictures of groggy pugilists and bush racehorses. He whistled softly, with his body half in the doorway, wondering whether he had better take off his hat before entering.

After breakfast Millicent hinted weakly about going to church. "Right, Mill!" said Ben, dropping the saw he was greasing; "we'll go now, though I've never been before. Put on your grey dress and the hat with the big black feather."

He followed her inside.

When they started, Ben walked ahead swinging his arms so that the shortness of his sleeves might not attract Mill's attention. For the first time in his life he took an interest in the long shadow that stretched about six fathoms ahead. In the middle of it was a hideous kink where the saddle had pressed his coat-tail outwards. The ridiculous shape of it hurt Ben beyond words.

Mill panted after him—he was sublimely unconscious that his terrific pace distressed her. She caught his hand: he slackened instantly and blushed a peony red.

The track swung over a hillock where the scattered cairns

of pick-torn stone recalled a one-time mining camp. They rested awhile : Ben propped himself against a blue-gum.

"Yer git a good breeze here on hot nights, Mill. Grand place fer a breeze."

She did not answer ; her fingers were shut over his, her parted lips drank the mountain air.

The rocks filtered great drops of mouth-cooling water into their outstretched hands : the sun stalked valiantly across the naked East, over treeless gullies and rolling downs. Through the still scrub they caught the moving gleams of tawny light radiated from leaf to leaf into the deeps of ebon shadows. He touched her hand unconsciously, and the wanton blood leaped to her throat and temples. She looked at him, and he seemed to her a part of the big, secret Bush. The light of morning was in his eyes, a fierce young light that she had not seen in the eyes of men who lurked under gasaliers and crouched over desks. He was staring absently at the red cattle wallowing in the reed-choked lagoon. He turned suddenly ; his long arm went out towards the tin-roofed box in the hollow.

"It ain't a flash place I've brought yer to, Mill. Yer might ha' done better."

Mill tugged at her cheap gloves and laughed softly. "Yer right, Ben, it ain't flash ; but, Lord ! we'll pull through."

"Course we will." He glanced at her stealthily, and noted the handful of shop violets tucked cunningly under the brim of her straw hat. There was n't a woman in the township who could fix violets over her little ear in the same way. He moistened his lips.

"We oughter be happy here, Mill," he said, "sein' it's me an' you."

"Yes, Ben," she acquiesced.

"They're alright people in Pyers when you know 'em," went on Ben ; "an' they're bound to take to you—bein' friendly with me, yer see."

She rose and took his arm. "O' course, Ben."

He stretched himself on his disengaged side and breathed lustily. The world seemed so young and glorious—it made his eyes

water. His voice trembled a little as he said, "Yer would n't believe what a place this is fer a breeze."

They moved onwards.

He chose a seat directly under the pulpit. "Keep yer 'ead agin the mahogany, Mill; they 'll be dyin' to see yer face when they come in; don't let 'em!"

The church at this time was empty; but it filled—filled to overflowing. "Don't forgit the mahogany, Mill!" whispered Ben behind his hand.

Their pew remained as sacred as a Hindu cow. The coach-driver pointed them out from a crowded porch, and his audience appeared spasmodically grateful for the information concerning Mrs. Ben. The driver admitted regretfully that his friend, Sam Hopkins, knew her pretty well, thanks—"wished I knew her as well." Still, it was n't for him to take away the character of a respectable married woman. Heard that she could cook as good a feed as anybody in Pyers, and if—— The organ took it up, and sent out a moaning "Adeste Fideles."

The minister thundered at his stoic congregation, and charged the air with strange, charitable precepts. At the end he waved a calm benediction over his respectable flock: "Go in peace, and sin no more!"

The men leered at Ben and Mill as they passed out; young girls gathered up skirts and scattered; obese wives and mothers cannoned in circling, agitated groups.

"Thank God the roof did n't fall on us this blessed day! The idea!"

Ben lifted his head and eyed the hostile gathering; some of them had known him for years—since the time when he used to drive about Pyers in a billy-goat tandem. A shout of mocking laughter followed them to the gate. Ben clinched his mouth; an unknown shame spread to his neck and face: something gripped his arm, and a word hummed in his ear that an ordinary woman never uses at any period of her life.

So they tramped along, voiceless and sullen, through paddocks where flowers nodded to a caressing wind, while the sun drew perfumes from the moist Spring earth. Mill's right hand bruised her breast savagely ; the other held his sleeve.

She glanced furtively at him across the room—his head down, his chin resting in the heel of his palm.

"Did I ever say I was a good girl, Ben? I ain't, Gawd 'elp me!"

She thrust herself beside him, shaking and trembling. Then Benjamin Stokes listened, almost for the first time in his life, to the commonest story in the world—a betrayal, a little shame, a gradual hardening, a world-defiance.

"The old woman at the boardin'-house said she 'd clear me out unless I was obligin' and civil to the gentlemen. So there were presents for Mill, and gloves planted in my bed . . . It all helped to take my head away from the damned 'ard scrubbin'. I ain't old—nineteen ain't very old, is it? Gimme a chance, Ben—gimme a chance!"

Something simmered in the fireplace ; plates clattered ; a shadowy girl moved about him all the afternoon in a dull, half-frightened way. He stumbled outside to the wood-heap, and the soft-eyed collie hung at his heels for a word.

The sun dropped to the edge of the plains, drenching the far-off hills with yellow mist. A rush of cool air brought the clang of bells ; he raised a rough and haggard face and spoke a word to the night—a word he used when punching cattle through an overflow. The dog fawned joyously . . . "Away, you beast!"—and a savage kick sent it howling down the track.

A candle flickered in the little bedroom, throwing a shape across the chintz curtain. "That bell again!" He walked a short distance from the house. How everyone knew! How everyone guessed the truth! What had happened at the church to-day would happen again with sickening regularity. He might force the

men to respect him with his fists ; but that cackling brood in the porch !

He struck a match and groped into the room to fling a word of hate at this Magdalen—and fell into a chair, silenced. The face was so pretty, so weak—prey for every libertine. The minister had said something about a woman who wiped the feet of Christ with her long meshes of hair ; nobody believed it, of course ; if they did, why was Mill treated as she had been ? He sat through the long night, heavy-browed and brooding, until a grey light from the east whitened the window-pane.

“ Mill ! ” She smiled sleepily at the word.

“ Mill ! ” The sound of his voice made her crouch on the rough pallet ; she stared at the white, haggard face in the half-light.

“ Don’t be frightened, Mill !—don’t be frightened ; I shan’t hit yer. I ’ve been thinkin’ ; and we ain’t goin’ to church again to let ’em worry us. I ’ll build another place over at Red Point on the hundred-acre patch ; if they come there to carry on I ’ll be about to receive ’em.”

Her face was hidden from him, but her hand crept into his big palm.

A few hours later Ben led a bay horse to the front and hopped into the saddle. She came to the door, her white arms splashed with milk and flour.

“ It ’s a long way to the Point, ain’t it, Ben ? ”

“ Yeh ! ”

She stole nearer—obviously to examine the horse. He threw himself forward and kissed her on the lips.

ALBERT DORRINGTON.

BASHER'S HURRICANE.

ASTONISHMENT is a word which faintly expresses the feeling of the ship's company when we learnt that Captain Basher had married. And when we saw the lady the puzzle grew harder than ever. She had been a Mrs. M'Cluskie—and looked it. Tall, bony, red, and freckled, with eyes the colour of galvanised iron, and teeth which would not have disgraced a small elephant—she was the finest sample of the unadulterated female porridge-eater that ever I clapped eyes on. She was to sail with us, too. We trembled.

It turned out that the captain had married her for the sake of the late M'Cluskie's money, and during the first half of that voyage he earned every penny of it. The ex-widow ruled the ship from the first moment she put her prunella-shod foot aboard us. Basher, the rollicking dare-devil, was tamed to the demeanour of a mouse. His wife was as pious as she was prudish, and she was as prudish as a prayer-meeting full of old maids. Basher shivered in his complaisance. He cuffed an ordinary seaman for unwittingly applying its proper name to a certain portion of the topsail brace-block. The coppered part of the vessel was always alluded to in the lady's presence as “the underneath part”; and the belly of a sail was spoken of apologetically, with bated breath. On Mrs. B.'s washing days, it was sacrilege to look over the counter, for the more essentially feminine of her garments were hung to dry from a sort of “parsheeboom,” rigged from the stern ports, and secure from the irreverent gaze of the rude sailor-man.

Basher lived two lives. With Mrs. B. below, he was his own profane self; with Mrs. B. on deck, it was “Mr. Brown, kindly step for'ard, and ascertain if the fore-to'-gallant-mast is sufficiently

stayed,"—or "Bo's'n, please inform the hands that to-morrow, being the Sabbath, Divine service will be held in the saloon, *as usual*"—ye gods! The strain on Basher must have been awful.

We were somewhere about the 50th parallel of latitude, having had to go farther to the southward than usual to look for wind, when Captain Basher rose in revolt. "This is too d——d fine a passage, Mr. Brown," he explained confidentially as he arranged his plan of campaign; "an' I guess, if we don't assist the blanky course of Nature, I'll never live to see port. So—to-morrow night!"

The next night came, starlit and beautiful. The weather being decidedly cold, Mrs. Basher had retired early to her bunk. There was a big swell; and the vessel was brought beam-on to it. The dead-lights, previously loosened by the carpenter, were removed from the deck above the cabin in which the lady slumbered, and a length of hose was led to reach from the "Downton" pump, at which four vigorous seamen waited eagerly for the order to "shake her up." A couple of hands were stationed on the half-round, with draw-buckets.

The ship was rolling terribly, scooping it up over both rails, and threatening to sling the sticks out of her. Captain Basher arrived on deck in a hurry, having locked his lady-love in her berth.

"Now, then, my lads, let her have it!" he said, and we did. That pump was never worked as it was worked that night, and the water poured in at the deck, whilst the men with the draw-buckets kept up a terrific broadside of cold salt-water through the open ports. The rest of the watch were employed with handspikes in thundering on the deck above Mrs. B.'s head. Basher at intervals bellowed orders of a heroic nature, whilst an apprentice and I kept the little brass signal-gun going till she got too hot to use.

Every few minutes our gallant captain would rush below to the door of the cabin. "Be brave, Jessie, my love, and remain where you are! We may yet weather this awful storm,"—he would roar through the keyhole; or, "Do not abandon hope, my dear beloved wife! the hurricane is now on our weather bow; but trust in God

and your William, and remember everything depends on your keeping cool." (Poor Mrs. B. was in all conscience cool enough.) Then, deaf to her screams to be liberated, Basher would rush on deck again to exhort us to further exertion.

We kept it up for two hours, when the captain gave orders to "ease up handsomely," and on things being made shipshape, the vessel was brought to her course again. Basher, having donned his oilskin and a life-belt, was pumped on to clinch the realism, and went below to his affrighted spouse, who was by this time more dead than alive.

We made the Cape ten days afterwards, and Mrs. B. did not continue the voyage with us, preferring to take steam to Plymouth. That was ten years ago, and the lady has never forgotten the horrors of that awful night. Captain Basher is living on her money somewhere Deptford way, secure from hurricanes and similar perils, for his wife will not hear of him going to sea again, with or without her.

F. MARRYAT NORRIS.



THE DROVER'S WIFE.

THE house contains two rooms; is built of round timber, slabs, and stringy bark, and floored with split slabs. A big bark kitchen stands at the end, and is larger than the house itself, verandah included.

Bush all round; bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye, save the darker green of a few she-oaks which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek. Nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilisation—a shanty on the main road.

The drover—an ex-squatter—is away with sheep. His wife and children are left here alone.

The children are playing about the house—four of them, ragged and dried-up looking. Suddenly one yells: “Snake! Mother, here’s a snake!”

The gaunt, sun-browned bushwoman darts from the kitchen, snatches “the baby” from the ground, holds it on her left hip, and reaches for a stick.

“Where is it?”

“Here! gone into the wood-heap!” yells the eldest boy—a sharp-faced, excited urchin of eleven. “Stop there, mother! I’ll have him. Stand back! I’ll have the beggar!”

“Tommy, come here, or you’ll be bit. Come here at once when I tell you, you little wretch!”

The youngster comes reluctantly, carrying a stick bigger than himself. Suddenly he yells, triumphantly:

“There it goes—under the house!” and darts away with club uplifted. At the same time, the big, black, yellow-eyed dog-of-all-

breeds, who has shown the greatest interest in the proceedings, breaks his chain and darts after that snake. He is a moment late, however, and his nose reaches the crack in the slabs just as the end of the snake's tail disappears. Almost at the same moment the boy's club comes down and skins the aforesaid nose. The dog takes small notice of this, and proceeds to undermine the building; but he is subdued after a struggle, and chained up. They can't afford to lose him.

The drover's wife makes the children stand together near the dog-house while she watches for the snake. She gets two small dishes of milk, and sets them down near the wall to tempt the snake out; but an hour goes by, and it does not show itself.

It is near sunset, and a thunderstorm is coming. The children must be brought inside. She will not take them into the house, for she knows the snake is there, and may at any moment come up through a crack in the rough slab floor. So she carries several armfuls of firewood into the kitchen, and then takes the children there. The kitchen has no floor, or rather an earthen one, called a "ground floor" in this part of the bush. There is a large, roughly-made table in the centre. She brings the children in and makes them get on this table. They are two boys and two girls—mere babies. She gives them some supper, and then, before it gets dark, she goes into the house, and snatches up some pillows and bed-clothes—expecting to see or lay her hand on the snake any moment. She makes a bed on the kitchen table for the children, and sits down beside it to watch all night.

She has an eye on the corner, and a green sapling club laid in readiness on the dresser by her side; also, her sewing-basket and a copy of the *Young Ladies' Journal*. She has brought the dog into the room.

Tommy turns in under protest, and says he'll lie awake all night and smash that blinded snake.

His mother asks him how many times she has told him not to swear.

He has his club with him under the bed-clothes, and the child next to him protests :

"Mummy ! Tommy's skinnin' me alive wiv his club ! Make him take it out !"

Tommy : "Shet up, you little —— ! D'yer want to be bit with the snake ?"

Jacky shuts up.

"If yer bit," says Tommy, after a pause, "you'll swell up, an' smell, an' turn red an' green an' blue all over till yer bust. Won't he, mother ?"

"Now then, don't frighten the child. Go to sleep," she says.

The two younger children go to sleep, and now and then Jacky complains of being "skeezed." More room is made for him. Presently Tommy says : "Mother ! listen to them (adjective) little 'possums. I'd like to screw their blanky necks."

And Jacky protests drowsily :

"But they don't hurt us, the little blanks !"

Mother : "There, I told you you'd teach Jacky to swear." But Jacky's remark makes her smile. Jacky goes to sleep.

Presently, Tommy asks :

"Mother ! Do you think they'll ever 'sterminate the (adjective) kangaroos ?"

"Lord ! How am I to know, child ? Go to sleep."

"Will you wake me if the snake comes out ?"

"Yes. Go to sleep."

Near midnight. The children are asleep and she sits there still, sewing and reading by turns. From time to time she glances round the floor and wall-plate, and whenever she hears a noise she reaches for the stick. The thunderstorm comes on, and the wind, rushing through the cracks in the slab wall, threatens to blow out her candle. She places it on a sheltered place of the dresser, and fixes up a newspaper to protect it. At every flash of lightning, the cracks between the slabs gleam like polished silver. The thunder rolls, and the rain comes down in torrents.

Alligator (the dog) lies at full length on the floor, with his eyes turned towards the partition. She knows by this that the snake is there. There are huge cracks in that wall, opening under the floor of the dwelling-house.

She is not a coward, but recent events have shaken her nerves. A little son of her brother-in-law was lately bitten by a snake, and died. Besides, she has not heard from her husband for six months, and is anxious about him.

He was a drover, and started squatting here when they were married. The drought of 18—ruined him. He had to sacrifice the remnant of his flock and go droving again. He intends to move his family into the nearest town when he comes back, and, in the meantime, his brother, who lives on the main road, comes over about once a month with provisions. The wife has still a couple of cows, one horse, and a few sheep. The brother-in-law kills one of the latter occasionally, gives her what she needs of it, and takes the rest in return for other provisions.

She is used to being left alone. She once lived like this for eighteen months. As a girl, she built the usual air-castles, but all her girlish hopes and aspirations are dead. She finds all the excitement and recreation she needs in the *Young Ladies' Journal*, and—Heaven help her!—takes a pleasure in the fashion-plates.

Her husband is an Australian, and so is she. He is careless, but a good enough husband. If he had the means, he would take her to the city and keep her there like a princess. They are used to being apart, or at least she is. "No use frettin'," she says. He may forget sometimes that he is married; but if he has a good cheque when he comes back, he will give most of it to her. When he had money, he took her to the city several times—hired a railway sleeping-compartment, and put up at the best hotels. He also bought her a buggy; but they had to sacrifice that along with the rest.

The last two children were born in the bush—one while her husband was bringing a drunken doctor, by force, to attend to her. She was alone on this occasion, and very weak. She had been ill

with a fever. She prayed to God to send her assistance. God sent Black Mary—the “whitest” gin in all the land.

One of her children died while she was here alone. She rode nineteen miles for assistance, carrying the dead child.

It must be near one or two o'clock. The fire is burning low. Alligator lies with his head resting on his paws, and watches the wall. He is not a very beautiful dog to look at, and the light shows numerous old wounds where the hair will not grow. He is afraid of nothing on the face of the earth, or under it. He will tackle a bullock as readily as he will tackle a flea. He hates all other dogs—except kangaroo dogs—and has a marked dislike to friends or relations of the family. They seldom call, however. He sometimes makes friends with strangers. He hates snakes, and has killed many, but he will be bitten some day, and die ; most snake-dogs end that way.

Now and then the bushwoman puts down her work, and watches, and listens, and thinks. She thinks of things in her own life, for there is little else to think about.

The rain will make the grass grow, and this reminds her how she fought a bush-fire once, while her husband was away. The grass was long, and very dry, and the fire threatened to burn her out. She put on an old pair of her husband's trousers, and beat out the flames with a green bough till great drops of sooty perspiration stood out on her forehead and ran in streaks down her blackened arms. The sight of his mother in trousers greatly amused Tommy, who worked like a little hero by her side ; but the baby howled lustily to be taken up, and the fire would have mastered her but for four excited bushmen, who arrived in the nick of time. It was a mixed-up affair all round. When she went to take up the baby he screamed and struggled convulsively, thinking it was a “black man” ; and Alligator, trusting more to the child's sense than his own instinct, charged furiously, and (being old and slightly deaf) did not in his excitement at first recognise his mistress's voice, but continued to hang on to the moleskins until choked off by Tommy

with a saddle-strap. The dog's sorrow for the mistake, and his anxiety to let it be known that it was all a mistake, were as evident as his ragged tail and a six-inch grin could make them. It was a glorious time for the boys ; a day to look back to, and talk about, and laugh over for many years.

She thinks how she fought a flood during her husband's absence. She stood for hours in the drenching downpour, and dug a drain to save the dam across the creek. But she could not save it. There are things that a bushwoman cannot do. Next morning the dam was broken, and her heart was nearly broken too, for she thought how her husband would feel when he came home and saw the result of months of labour swept away. She "cried" then.

She also fought "the pleuro," dosed and bled the few remaining cattle, and wept again when her two best cows died.

Again, she fought a mad bullock that besieged the house for a day. She made bullets and fired at him through cracks in the slabs, with an old shot-gun. He was dead in the morning. She skinned him, and afterwards got seven-and-sixpence for the hide.

She also fights the crows and eagles that have designs on her chickens. Her plan of campaign is very original. The children cry "Crows, mother !" and she rushes out and aims a broom-stick at the birds, as though it were a gun, and says "*Bung !*" The crows leave in a hurry ; they are cunning, but a woman's cunning is greater.

Occasionally a bushman in the horrors, or a villainous-looking sundowner, comes and scares the life out of her. She generally tells the suspicious-looking stranger that "My husband and two sons are at work below the dam," for he always cunningly enquires for "the boss."

Only last week a gallows-faced swagman—having satisfied himself or been informed that there were no men on the place—threw his swag down on the verandah, and demanded "tucker." She gave him something to eat, and he expressed his intention of staying for the night. It was sundown then. She got a batten from the sofa, loosened the dog, and confronted the stranger—holding the

batten in one hand and the dog's collar with the other. "Now, you go!" she said. He looked at her and at the dog, and said, "All right, mum," in a cringing tone, and left. She was a determined-looking woman, and Alligator's yellow eyes glared unpleasantly. Besides, the dog's chawing-up apparatus seemed not unlike a real alligator's.

She has few pleasures to think of as she sits here alone by the fire, on guard against a snake. All days are much the same to her; but on Sunday afternoons she dresses herself, tidies the children, smartens up baby, and goes for a lonely walk along the bush-track, pushing an old perambulator in front of her. She does this every Sunday. She takes as much care to make herself and her children "look smart," as she would if she were going to "do the block" in Sydney. There is nothing to see, however, and not a soul to meet. You may walk for twenty miles along this track without being able to fix a point in your mind, unless you are a bushman. This is because of the maddening, everlasting sameness of the stunted trees—that monotony which makes a new-chum long to break away and travel as far as trains can go, and sail as far as ships can sail, and farther.

But this bushwoman is used to the loneliness of it. As a girl-wife she hated it, but now she would feel strange away from it.

She is glad when her husband returns, but she does not gush or make a fuss about it. She gets him something good to eat, and tidies up the children.

She seems contented with her lot. She loves her children, but has no time to show it. She seems harsh to them. Her surroundings are not favourable to the development of the "womanly" or sentimental side of her nature.

It must be near morning now, but the clock is in the other room. Her candle is nearly done; she forgot that she was out of candles. Some more wood must be got to keep the fire up, so she shuts the dog inside and hurries round to the wood-heap.

The rain has cleared off. She seizes a stick, pulls it out, and—*crash!* the whole pile collapses, and nearly frightens her to death.

Yesterday she bargained with a stray blackfellow to bring her some wood, and while he was at work she went in search of a missing cow. She was absent an hour or so, and the black made good use of his time. On her return she was astonished to see a great heap of wood by the chimney. She gave the black an extra fig of tobacco, and praised him for not being lazy. He thanked her, and left with head erect. But he had built the wood-heap hollow.

She is hurt now, and tears spring to her eyes as she sits down again by the table. She snatches up a handkerchief to wipe the tears away, but pokes her eyes with her bare fingers instead. The handkerchief is full of holes, and she finds that she has put her thumb through one and her forefinger through another.

This makes her laugh suddenly, to the surprise of the dog. She has a keen, very keen sense of the ridiculous; and, some time or another, she will amuse bushmen by relating this incident. Often she has told how one day she sat down "to have a good cry," as she said—and the old cat rubbed against her dress and "cried too." Then she "had to laugh."

Now it is near daylight. The room is very close and hot because of the fire. Alligator still watches the wall from time to time. Suddenly he becomes greatly interested; he draws himself a few inches nearer the partition, and a thrill runs through his body. The hair on the back of his neck begins to bristle, and the battle-light is in his yellow eyes. She knows what this means, and lays her hand on the stick. The lower end of one of the partition slabs has a large crack on each side of it. An evil pair of small, bright, bead-like eyes glistens at one of these holes. The snake—a black one—comes slowly out, about a foot, and moves its head up and down. The dog lies still, and the woman sits as one fascinated. The snake comes out a foot further. She lifts her stick, and the reptile, as though suddenly aware of danger, sticks his head in through the crack on the other side of the slab, and hurries to get

his tail round after him. Alligator springs, and his jaws come together with a snap. He misses this time, for his nose is large, and the snake's body is close down in the angle formed by the slab and the floor. He snaps again as the tail comes round. He has the snake now, and tugs it out eighteen inches. *Thud ! thud !* comes the woman's club on the ground. Alligator pulls again. *Thud ! thud !* Alligator pulls some more. He has the snake out now—a black brute, five feet long. The head rises to dart about, but the dog has the enemy close to the neck. He is a big, heavy dog, but as quick as a terrier. He shakes the snake as though he felt the original curse in common with mankind. The eldest boy wakes up, seizes his stick, and makes to get out of bed, but his mother forces him back with a grip of iron. *Thud ! thud !* the snake's back is broken in several places. *Thud ! thud !* the head is crushed, and Alligator's nose skinned again.

The woman lifts the mangled reptile on the point of her stick, carries it to the fire and throws it in. Then she piles on the wood, and watches the snake burn. The boy and dog watch, too. She lays her hand on the dog's head, and all the fierce, angry light dies out of his yellow eyes. The younger children are quieted, and presently go to sleep. The dirty-legged boy stands for a moment in his shirt, watching the fire. Presently he looks at her. He sees the tears in her eyes, and, suddenly throwing his arms round her neck, exclaims :

“Mother, I won't never go drovin' ; blast me if I do !”

And she hugs him to her worn-out breast and kisses him, and they sit thus together while the sickly daylight breaks over the bush.

HENRY LAWSON.

A NIGHT AT KELLY'S.

inter-island steamer
IT looked like rain as I got off the ~~coach~~. Leaving my bags and rug on the road, I climbed the hillside, on which Pat Kelly's pub. was fastened in some mysterious way that kept it from being blown over by the tornadoes which rushed up and down the narrow cleft between the hills.

Arrived on the verandah, I said to the landlord, "Those are my bags at the foot of the hill." The information did not seem to interest him much, as he made no reply, but went into the bar and began rubbing a dirty glass with a dirty towel, as if expecting an order; also, he wiped his sore eyes with that towel. No business eventuating, he called a servant to show me a room.

While waiting, I noticed that the passage was sprinkled with straw and stable litter, which the wind had blown in at the back door and had not strength to blow out at the front, so the refuse lay there waiting for the next squall. A crowd of dirty, bare-legged children ran about, crying and fighting, and, as I stood in the passage, a lady with a fat, bloated face and swollen eyelids came to a bedroom-door and looked at me with that serious intentness assumed by most drunken people when trying to appear perfectly sober. I was not sure whether she was my hostess until she clouted one or two of the howling children in an absent sort of way, as if it were a matter of habit. After this she shut the door with a lofty look that seemed to say she thought it would be unladylike to speak to me without an introduction.

The servant now appeared, a fat girl, with uncombed hair and bare feet. Her dress was open for two or three hooks at the neck, and, as if that did not display her charms sufficiently, there was a spacious rent above the collar-bone. She

showed me to my room with many smirks and coquettish looks, and—though her dress reached only to her ankles, and had a placket-gap three inches across—grabbed a handful of it at the back and lifted it up, after the fashion of a lady crossing a muddy street.

By this time it was raining heavily, and I congratulated myself on being housed for the night. After half-an-hour I thought of something I wanted in my bags, but, on going to the room, they were nowhere to be found. I then went to the bar and asked Kelly. He looked astonished:

"Bags, is it? Shure I dunno; barrin' they're wher' ye lift thim."

"But why were they not brought in?"

"Ye niver said annythin' about wantin' thim in."

"But I told you where they were."

"Yis, ye did; but I t'ought ye only mintioned it t' make the conversation interestin' loike. But hould an; I'll call Mike. . . . Mick! Mickee!!" he shouted; but there was no response. "Ah, niver moint; I'll sind him for thim bine-boi. He'll be afther gettin' the cows now." And, as if the matter were finally settled, he languidly wiped another glass.

Not being willing to wait, I went out through the driving rain and brought up my sodden properties. As I climbed the slippery bank, I heard loud peals of laughter above me, and, looking up, saw a girl about seventeen who was evidently enjoying my struggles with the luggage and the mud. She was the landlord's daughter—as she told me after she had laughed sufficiently at the appearance of the wet luggage. Her name was Gladys Ethel, and, even in this house of wild disorder, she was a unique figure. Jet-black masses of tangled, touzled hair fell upon her shoulders and straggled over her face. Her mane had probably never been combed, and nothing but a garden rake would have gone through it. Her face was dirty, and the unlaced boots that hung on her unstockinged feet had the tongues hanging out, while the laces went clickety-clack as she stamped along the echoing floor. Large teeth, a loose, thick-lipped,

open mouth, and large, staring blue eyes completed Gladys Ethel's outward personality.

I fled to my room to wait for tea, but when it came, it was not an unmixed joy. Pat Kelly stood at the head of the table clashing a knife and fork together with a sound like a broadsword combat. In front of him were corned and roast beef, and, as I came in, he was shouting loudly, "Now then, ye chaps ; come in to tay, or divil a bite ye 'll get." Mrs. Kelly, whose only toilette had been evidently a couple of "snifters," sat at her husband's right, and was comporting herself with much dignity. As Pat carved the food he cried out, "Now, what 'll ye hov, misther ? Cornbafé or mate ?" but Mrs. Kelly corrected him sharply :

"Pat Kelly, why d'ye be comincin' to ate like wan o' thim blackfellys ? Why the divil don't ye be afther puttin' the Crass o' Christ an the beautiful mate ye have forninst ye ? Annybuddy 'd think ye wuz brung up like a haythen, so they wud. Put an the Crass o' Christ this minit, I tell ye, Pat Kelly !"

"Och, I can't be bothered ; let thim that wants put it an the'rselves." But Mrs. Kelly's company manners were not satisfied until Pat mumbled a "grace"—"For what we are about to resave"—"Daddy, make Johnny kape still ; he wants to go out an' play futball"—"may the Lord make us"—"Ye 're a liar !" said Johnny, in reply to the football accusation—"Amin. If ye don't kape quite, ye divil, I 'll trow the kyarvin'-knife at the head o' yez !"

Then the feeding began. Mick, who had got back with the cows, sat next me. He was aged, deaf, and dilapidated, and he shovelled his food into his mouth with a knife and a stolid determination to lose no time. Utterly oblivious of what was going on around him, he did not hear Reginald Kelly, aged five, saying, "Mick, my soup too 'ot." Mick took no notice, so the boy, to prove his words, ladled up a spoonful, and held it to the old man as a sample, but it spilled down his shirt-front. Again the boy said, "Mickee, my soup too 'ot," and held out another spoonful, which was spilt also. At last the hot soup penetrated the old man's clothing,

and, looking down, he discovered the boy giving him a soup bath. A sounding whack sent Reginald to the floor, and the veteran resumed his shovelling unmoved till the boy came at him under the table and bit his leg. Mick replied to this with a terrific kick, and Reginald was led howling away by Gladys Ethel, who promised him his tea in the kitchen.

After tea a young man came to see Gladys Ethel, and sat beside her in a dark room off the bar. He was evidently a very devoted young man, for loud smacks, as of kissing, were heard frequently, especially when footsteps approached the door of the room. Everybody knows that a kiss broken off suddenly in the middle gives forth a sound like the first efforts of a pump-sucker to draw water when the well is low. Kelly apparently disliked the youth, for he left the bar several times, and "hunted" him with much bad language and some cuffs on the ear. But the lover was not the sort to be discouraged by any little thing like that, for he invariably came back, and he and Gladys Ethel resumed their affectionate communings with renewed ardour. When parent Kelly had "hunted" the young man for the fifth time, I judged a little fresh air would do me good. I came back from my walk an hour later, to find Gladys Ethel's parent kicking the lover out for the last time, while Gladys stood at the door and laughed loudly.

I went to my room and found, in addition to my luggage, a large, greasy swag and a black tin billy. This seemed to indicate a room-mate, and was a distinct violation of my agreement, which was for a room to myself. I called Kelly, but he made light of it: "'Tis only an ould frind of moine that kem in afther tay; he's a very 'quite' man, and shure he may as well be usin' the spare bed as it layin' oidle." So, making the best of it, I turned in and was soon asleep, dreaming that wild mermaids, with snaky hair, were chasing me all through Kelly's premises for a kiss.

I was awakened by Kelly's voice:

"For Gawd's sake, Rine! do be quite; ye'll be wakin' the jintleman there."

"T'hell wid the jintleman! Shure, I'm as good a man as him, an' bettther too, for all I bruk me leg; wake him up an' I'll fight him."

"No, no! Go to bid, Rine, that's a dear man."

"Wait till I show ye how I bruk me leg," said Ryan, whom I judged was the "quiet" man Kelly had told me of. He took off his trousers and showed his skinny leg—bent, stiff, and knobby at the knee like that of a 'bus-horse. He danced around, clad only in his shirt, begging Kelly to let him get at me. He would show me his leg, and then fight me for drinks all round. I thought it best to sham sleep. Eventually he fell into slumber, and I followed suit. Kelly came in half-an-hour later and woke me up to say that Ryan was now quiet, and that I might go to sleep without fear of further disturbance. I daresay I should have found that out myself, but Kelly evidently meant well. About five in the morning, loud shouts and sounds as of someone being strangled awoke me, but, to my relief, it was only Ryan snoring and probably fighting me in his sleep.

Finding it impossible to doze off again, I got up, dressed, and went to the parlour to read. An hour later Gladys Ethel, mooning sleepily down the passage, saw me and came in smiling, showing a wealth of mouth that in the morning light looked appalling. She had not washed her face, and her hair was even wilder and more matted than before. Also there were some bits of straw and feathers among the locks—which, no doubt, the wind would blow out later in the day.

The next time I went that way I camped out, but a passing swagman told me Gladys Ethel was married. It seems that Kelly, being very busy in the bar one night, neglected to kick the lover out as often as usual, and when he did go into the room the pair had eloped together. I also heard on bad authority that Gladys unaccountably reformed after marriage, and kept herself reasonably clean, and wore stockings, and fixed her mane in a knob at the back of her head. But this statement rests on no satisfactory evidence,

PERCE ABBOTT.

MEN AND WOMEN.

CONSOLATION.

THERE was moonlight on the water. The wind blew cold from the south-east and sent a gleaming ripple across the bay. Far out the dark outline of an island stood in silhouette against the sky; and from the bush came the plaintive cry of the curlew. A narrow jetty ran away out to the deep water. Upon it a man sat fishing; his line loose in his hand and a deep frown upon his forehead.

Fate had been cruel that day. The man had told himself in the morning that he would confess his love to the most adorable woman on earth, and ask her to be his wife.

But circumstances conspired, and he had found no opportunity to speak with her alone. And now, as he sat looking down at the shadows on the water, he heard voices—a man and woman were singing, away up at the hotel on the cliff. The voice of the man was that of his dearest friend, and the woman's voice was the voice of her he loved.

Hushed by the distance, he heard the deep tones of the man as he sang :

Dear one, dost thou love me true?
Tell me true, tell me true!

And her voice, how sweet it was!—

Must I then my secret tell?—
Yes, I love thee well.

Then their voices blended :

We are pledged to love for ever,
Let the world say what it may;
Nought but death our hearts can sever,
Love with life shall pass away.

And the man on the jetty sighed.

The music ceased; there was a sound of a door opened and closed; and the figures of the singers came down the hillside

together. The fisherman in the shadow heard their voices as they came toward him. They spoke of music, of poetry, of love; and he knew as he listened that he had only dreamed of happiness.

After a while the woman said, "How cold it is!" and gave a little shiver. And the man by her side took off his coat and threw it over her shoulders. She protested, but he fastened it about her throat.

As his fingers—a man's fingers—fumbled at the button he said: "Let me keep you from the cold—dear—for always." And she looked up at him, and he clasped her in his arms and kissed her lips.

The man sitting looking into the water felt that there was nothing left for him to live for. Now he had not even a friend. But he kept the line in his hand.

Back up the hill went the lovers with arms entwined. And he was alone with his grief.

Presently his line tightened with a jerk. He rose quickly to his feet, and hand over hand he drew it in. The strain was great, and the frown disappeared from his brow. Steadily now he hauled in—cautiously—easy—ah! Before him lay the great, shining, scaly fish.

He smiled. His face was lit up with the smile.

He baited another hook, threw in his line, and sitting down again looked fixedly into the water.

There are many good fish in the sea.

G. J. V. MACKAY.



HER COUP-DE-THÉÂTRE.

THEY had been engaged for a year and a half, but lately she had noticed that his love was beginning to cool. He never talked in the old, rapturous way of "some day," and their daily meetings had dwindled down to weekly, without even letters between.

The last time she saw him she had noticed that her laughter and smart speeches jarred on him, and he had spoken in praise of a

woman of their acquaintance with a soft, cooing voice. "Purring," the girl called it.

She expected him to-night, and had made up her mind for battle, and victory. She clad herself in her woman's armour—a dress he liked the best, a clinging white cashmere that left her throat and shoulders bare. Her soft round arms and neck were her strongest weapons, and she meant to use them.

She was sitting in a low chair when he came, and he noticed how the yellow cushion behind her head suited her eyes, her soft brown eyes.

She rose as he came toward her and held out her hands with a glad gesture. "I knew you would come to-night, for I have been thinking of you all day."

He sat down by the fire, but she did not go back to her chair. She stood behind him, her fingers playing in his hair in a tender, motherly way. She did not speak for some minutes, but he could feel her heart against his ear as she leant over him. It made it very hard for him to say what he had come to tell her. He wished he had written, or waited till to-morrow. Why had she worn that frock to-night? He had not seen it for months. And why was she so soft and sweet to-night, when she had been so different lately?

"Dear!"—her voice was a caress,—"why did you stay away so long? I have been *so* lonely." Her bare arm came soft and warm round his neck, and her cheek was laid on his hair.

He could never tell her like this. He must do it at once.

He got up quickly and walked across the room and back again. She stood watching him with a hurt, wondering look.

"What is the matter, Jim? Something is troubling you. Have you anything to tell me?"

"Yes, I have. Won't you sit down? I can't talk while you are standing there."

She sat down in her chair by the fire, but he stood against the mantelshelf. It gave him courage to stand thus looking down on her; and clumsily, in his man's way, he told her what he had come to say.

It was just what she had expected. They had both made a mistake. . . . They were not suited to each other. . . . He had met another girl, a little, fair-haired thing who was just the sort of gentle woman he wanted for a wife.

"You are too clever for me, Joy, you know. You would soon grow tired of a big, stupid fellow like me. You want a man who can talk poetry and metaphysics and stuff like that. And I want a wife who cares for home things more than books. You must see that we have both been mistaken, don't you, Joy?"

She sat listening, with her hands clasped before her, her eyes never leaving his face for one second. When he finished speaking, she made just one little choking sound, and hid her face against the chair.

She did not speak at all, and he stood looking down at her, wishing she would not sit like that, wishing she would say something. He had expected angry, cutting things; but instead there was silence, and that bent head. What a pretty head it was! The firelight shone on the bright brown hair, and played in the deep ripples above her ear. Those ripples were never made by tongs or curling-pins, and neither was that little curl that lay on her neck, and tried to hide the tiny mole. He remembered that mole so well. She had always grumbled at it, but he had kissed it and called it her beauty-spot. How long ago that was! It was soon after they were engaged; the night he had given her that emerald ring. He glanced at her hand hanging limp by her side. Yes, there it was in the same place on her little finger—she would not have it on the third. Her hand would look strange without it, for it was the only one she wore. It was a dear hand. Too thin for actual beauty, but soft and well-shaped; and, after all, he did *not* like fat hands. Hers were firm and cool, and so comforting when one's head ached. Ethel's hands were such baby things, soft and pink and kissable, but he liked a woman to have firm, strong hands best. Joy's were strong. He remembered how she had held his dog the day the poor little brute broke its leg. She had cried so hard afterwards, too. He wondered if she were crying now. Her

head was still hidden. Would she never look round? He could n't stand it much longer. He wanted to comfort her. That little mole seemed to invite him to kiss it. He——

She lifted her head and looked at him. Her eyes were wet, but they gleamed with a depth of love he had never seen there before. All the sparkle had gone out of them, but something sweeter had come in. She rose and came to where he was standing.

"Perhaps you are right, dear! I *am* too hard and worldly for you." Hard!—with that look in her eyes! "She will make the soft, yielding wife you want, and I know you will be happy. We will say good-bye, and you must go away for a while, and then I shall get used to it—some day."

She was fidgetting with some violets in a bowl beside her, and he could see she had something more to say.

Suddenly she lifted her face to him and held out her hands.

"Jim, Jim! kiss me just once before you go! You will be hers soon, but now you are mine still. I love you; oh, my dear, I love you!"

Her head was thrown back. Her red lips were parted in eagerness, and her eyes glowed with passion. She had never looked so beautiful before. For one second he looked at her, and then . . . one white arm was round his neck, her head was bowed on his shoulder, and she had conquered.

When he said good-bye, two hours later, it was settled that the wedding should be in a month.

"I nearly made a big mistake," he said; "which only proves that I was right when I said you were too sweet and clever for such an ass."

Her only answer then was a kiss, but when the door closed behind him she smiled at herself in the glass.

"Yes, he was right! I *am* too clever for him. It was a fine piece of acting, *ma chère*!"—with a little bow to her image in the glass—"and it brought down the house!"

AN EGOTIST.

HIS first impression on reading the letter was one of unreality. It had been lying opposite his seat at table, and, with a premonitory chill, he had torn open the envelope and tilted back his chair to read. As in a dream he went over it again, but a third reading accentuated the phrases and brought acutely to his mind all that the loss of her meant. He looked up to find the others engrossed with their meal, and wondered angrily that there should be such indifference to his pain. Then, catching glances in his direction, he crammed the letter in a pocket and made a pretence at eating, lest anyone should guess at his discomfiture.

Dinner over, he hastened to his room and read her letter again and again, noting, through a maze of wonderment, here a trick of words, there the lapse into an accustomed endearment. Sitting idly on the bed, he absorbed slowly the multiplicity of her conflicting reasons, as also her confident assumption of his agreement in them; then wondered vaguely if he were hurt—if this dull numbness meant bitter anguish, or merely emotional disappointment.

She was returning his letters and ring. He affected a contemptuous laugh—tribute to an imaginary audience. His ring! To be treasured as the tombstone of his love? This, obtruding on his reflections as rather neat, he made a note of to use in his reply.

He was taking it very well, he thought. Decidedly, there were few men who, loving her as he did—had done—would have accepted the dismissal so philosophically. And, after all, there were compensations. Freedom offered a wider scope for enjoyment than a life of domesticity. Some theatre-tickets and a tailor's bill stuck in his mirror suggested the fact that he had never denied himself a pleasure. He met this with the reflection that future indulgences would be without conscience-qualms. He was tired, too, of writing—of the weekly repetition of verbal caresses. She had complained of the coldness of his letters. But it was impossible to be always at fever-heat. There had been, too, demands on his time and purse, which he had found it difficult to explain or even specify.

Women never understood these things. She wrote of the delay, the frequent postponements, and the long years of weary waiting. Well, riches were not to be won in a day, and he was no selfish egotist to ask a woman to share poverty merely because she loved him. That her younger sister and two girl friends had married in the interval had no bearing on *their* case. It was so like a woman's logic to quote these facts as it were in reproach to him. She had known at the time of their engagement what his prospects were. He had been perfectly honest in defining his position. And if she had not been prepared to wait, why had she——? The longer he considered, the clearer it became that she had treated him very badly. Still, she was a woman. He would be generous with her.

The question of his reply came to him. This needed consideration, for it was imperative that she should recognise her position—and her loss. It would be futile to pretend he had never loved her, just as it would be absurd to refute her arguments. Women, he reflected, never reasoned.

Remembering she had always dreaded his sarcasm, he decided that an admixture of bitterness and cynicism would prove effective. The desire to look well, to present the best possible appearance, was fast possessing him.

He was soon absorbed in the composition of his reply, almost to the exclusion of his earlier feelings. After many alterations, he completed a fair copy, and read it over with satisfaction. A particular phrase fitted in so well with his admiration of himself as to raise him almost to exultation.

"Now, I call that good," he said, surveying himself in his mirror as though for confirmative applause. "Damned good!" A momentary regret that he would not be present to witness its effect on her somewhat chilled his enthusiasm. Pride in his handiwork increased till a craving for sympathetic appreciation dominated all his previous emotions.

"I wonder if old Strong is in," he said, handling his letter with an almost caressing care. "I'll go and read this to him. He'll enjoy it."

E. & O. E.

TWO VERDICTS.

He sat beside her on the sofa, holding her two hands in his.

Neither spoke, for they imagined they understood one another perfectly, and the silence was only broken by the droning hum of London's traffic, and the rustling of the lace curtains in the soft June breeze that played with the girl's brown hair. She was the first to break the silence :

"Kenneth, dear!"—the pencilled eyebrows arched inquiringly—"Kenneth, dear, how much do you love me? So much that nothing, nothing, *nothing* could ever make any difference?"

"Nothing could: you know that well, little woman," he answered. "What's up with you now?"

"I'm so glad," she said. "I wanted to tell you something. I always meant to tell you, but somehow I could n't till to-night. Ken, there was a man once——"

"Was there, really? I expect there were several men once, if you were like you are now."

"No there were n't. There was only one; he made love to me, and I thought I cared for him; and I tried to show him how much I cared. There was only one sort of love he seemed to understand, and I—I—oh, Ken, it was five years ago, and—you aren't angry, Ken, darling, are you?"

The man's face was chalk-white.

In the silence that followed the girl thought she could hear her heart beat. Then the man slowly and deliberately took the diamond-and-turquoise ring from her finger—and left her.

He turned at the door, and looked at her. "You've spoilt my life," he said. "Good-bye!"

He paused on the Thames embankment, looking at the muddy river.

"Two tenners is n't much," he said; and then two diamonds glinted for a second in the moonlight as they touched the water.

The turquoise did not catch the light; but then turquoise signifies "love"—and love was dead. From somewhere in the

Strand, he could hear a string-band playing Tosti's "Venetian Song," once a favorite song of his. Now the words seemed meaningless to him as he hummed them—

We are alone !
The world, my own,
Doth hold but you and me !

"What damned rot !" he said.

They sat together in a long cane chair on the station verandah. The stillness of the moonlight night was only broken by the wail of the curlews and an occasional "moo" of motherly solicitude from the milkers outside the calf-pen fence. The girl spoke first.

"How much do you love me, Ken ?" she asked.

"So much, darling," the man answered, "that I won't marry you under false pretences. You think I'm a sort of a King Arthur, but I've been more of a Don Juan ; I've been several different sorts of a blackguard, dear. You can't understand ; you're too good and pure ; but five years ago I came a bad cropper through a woman, and I've been a beast since. I wish I could make you understand, but——"

"I do understand, old boy," she answered ; "but tell me, Ken—never since you knew me ?"

"Never, darling, I swear that. Do you hate me for what I've told you ?"

"Hate you ? No, why should I ; you're mine now, and what does it matter to me what you *used* to be ?"

In the drawing-room the squatter's other daughter, fresh from a Sydney school, began to sing Tosti's "Venetian Song" (with the soft pedal down).

We are alone !
The world, my own,
Doth hold but you and me,
But you and me !

The man drew the girl close to him and kissed her.

"I just love that song !" he said.

A WOMAN AND A FLY.

SHE was a sort of experimentalist in emotions, and she was lonely. Teaching in the backblocks sharpens the flirtation-palate of a pretty girl, and does not decrease her possibilities.

As regarded this particular victim, she had not meant to go further than an experiment. He saw things differently.

He was only a "cocky," with little brain beyond sheep; and she was rather a clever girl, with no desire for settling in life at twenty. What tempted her into mischief was his size—he was one of those tall, strong, hot-tempered male animals who always seem to appeal to small women.

They were returning from a ride one afternoon at sunset, when the plains were tenderly tipped with violet and gold. He was thinking of her; she was thinking of the other man—in Sydney.

"I am not going to fall in love with you." The suddenness of the remark aroused her; its piquancy startled her.

"No?" she queried tentatively. He was silent.

The girl laughed softly as she hummed, "Nobody asked you, sir, she said"; at the same time steadying her horse to a walk. The experiment was promising, she reflected, and she wanted the full measure of its sensations. When you have a fly on a pin you should watch it wriggle, and enjoy yourself.

He looked at her suspiciously, with an uncomfortable idea that she was laughing at him. Very likely she was: she never took these impressionable men seriously.

"Pretend you did n't try?" he suggested. She shook her little head with sudden gravity. "You do not understand me—dear!" She said the last word softly, daringly.

When they reached home, and he was lifting her from the saddle, he suddenly kissed her. What came over her that she did not protest? She could not understand: she was generally particular in these matters. Besides, she was curiously cold-blooded, and so never attempted to lose her self-respect. The man was trembling—things were getting beyond a joke for him.

A few days after, he called again. She was very subdued, and more puzzling than ever. She was lying in a camp-chair on the verandah, dreamily watching the shadows chasing each other in and out of the straggling belt of timber in the distance.

"Is there any hope for me?"

She looked up at him quickly, half-frightened at the expression on his face.

"For what?" she said, shrinkingly.

"Well, you let me kiss you; you know what *that* means!" His voice sounded like a threat.

She looked up at him thoughtfully; the tall, well-knit figure pleased her—one part of her; but the narrow forehead and general unpolished look about him offended the other part of her. "I don't see how I could prevent you," she ventured audaciously.

He literally gasped: "Why, you never tried!"

"I was too hurt," said the girl, with a pretty air of dignity.

His face grew absolutely miserable; and she became afraid that compassion (a frequent and unsuspected foe to some women) would master her wisdom. She took a mental leap into the possible future. She saw herself his wife and him the father of her children.

That thought saved her. It had been an interesting experiment, and the fly had wriggled beautifully; but 't was time to kill it.

"Good-bye," she said.

NELLIE BRUTON.



AFTER MANY YEARS.

SHE met him in her teens, when life's glamour was upon them. She was simple and unsophisticated; he, high-spirited and manly. In her twenties, they drifted apart in pride and misunderstanding. The "eternal love" of a boy and a girl became a thing of far-back memories.

In her thirties, she one day entered a railway-carriage—a smiling, gracious woman of the world. In the carriage was a single

occupant. She bowed and smiled as she recognised her fellow-traveller, then sank into a window-corner and tried to think of nothing in particular as she watched the disappearing trees and cottages. It would take two hours to reach the next station.

How long it was since they had met, and how dear he had been! Even now she could feel his lips upon her hair, and his strong hands imprisoning hers. She glanced towards him. What a look of pain was on his face! He, too, must be thinking. Again she looked. Without a word he held out his arms. Ah! how sweet the time when she could creep into them as into a sheltered fold.

Suddenly the weight of years rolled from her. She was a girl again, and he her king. Throwing aside her heavy cloak she swept towards him with a sob that was almost a gasp, and the next moment was folded close in his embrace, her face buried on his shoulder.

"O, Frank!" she cried. "Frank, forgive me! I *did* kiss Charlie on the balcony that evening; but I never thought such a slight sin would bring so great a punishment."

"My love!" he answered, "at last we understand each other!"

"At last!" she echoed, as she held up her red lips for a kiss, and almost unconsciously pushed the brown curls from off his forehead as in past days.

"Oh, why was fate so cruel? Why were we parted so long?"

"Nothing shall part us again, Nellie."

"No, nothing in Heaven or on earth. I am yours now, and for ever and ever."

Once again were passionate kisses given and returned, once again was the golden head cushioned on the heart that made so sweet a resting-place.

"How far are you going, Frank?"

"To the end of the world, pet; to the very end of our lives together."

She lifted her head, and half drew herself from his arms.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what you said just now, that nothing in Heaven or on earth shall take you from me, or me from you again."

"I was mad!" she answered. "But let me be yours for five minutes longer; then—love must die and life end. Kiss me again—again!"

The train whistled. She tore herself from his arms, threw on her cloak, and took her sunshade from the rack.

He stood before her, wonder-stricken.

"Good-bye," she said, bowing and smiling; and the same gracious woman who had entered the carriage at the last station left it at this; and, without a trace of emotion on her fair face, joined her husband and children on the platform.

VICTOR ZEAL.



HE HAD NOT HURT HER.

SHE was young when Love came—very young. Life was still hedged round with dreams. At her age life might be stormy, sad, or lonely, but never flat and tasteless. Then the world burst into blossom suddenly and unreasonably—as it does when one is very young. And, of course, Love was everything.

For a month they met and gloried in the sunrise delicacy of unspoken passion. The month passed away. He did not speak; she dared not; and the world turned into mourning. Yet she cherished her dream for seven years.

They met again. What a passionate pulse played in her blood! Old ghosts came out and stared at her everywhere. She looked to the meeting with unspeakable dread and longing. They met; and with a great ache she recognised that her lover had died with her youth. The man who stood in his place was an alien and a stranger. The faint mannerisms he possessed in old days had become decided habits. Where a dimple had been on the boy's face a wrinkle lay in the man's. She had grown more fastidious and

discerning. He had grown less so. She had ripened and enriched ; he had ceased growing with her last knowledge of him, and was perfectly satisfied with himself. She looked into his changed, shallow eyes with a breaking heart, and said to herself, "What matter? Love is all. For life or death I am his. He has needed me. That is all. I will take his life again, and Paradise will come back to the earth."

"Surely you will never marry him?" said her friends, guessing her thoughts. "I would throw away your life!"

"Love is all!" she said.

One sweet, dark evening he walked home with her. His manner had the old tenderness, but none of the old doubt. He drew her hand through his arm. She permitted it. Then, for the first time since their meeting, he spoke of the past.

"I believe you loved me then," he said.

"And you?" she queried.

"You know!" he answered, softly. For a thrilling second the past lived again. "And you?" he insisted.

Then she flung off her long, maiden silence, and spoke: "I loved you—God knows I did!" There was something of the wail from the dead in it. Nevertheless, it was the supreme moment of her life. She soared into heights unguessed—far, far from the man at her side.

For the first time his complacency was disturbed. "I was not worthy," he whispered.

She answered with sweet scorn: "A man must be honourable."

"But you heard something about me?" he insisted.

"Nothing."

"I thought you might have heard some gossip."

"No."

"Well, I would have been married, but there were difficulties in the way. She thinks a great deal of me."

In a waking dream she heard such sentences as: "When a fellow looks for a home" . . . "She is awfully fond of me." Her senses came back as she heard him say: "But I would n't like to

think I had done you any kind of wrong. You see, women are not like men. They hold on to things ; but a man forgets. You don't think I have hurt you at all, do you ? ”

She looked at the familiar scene. The scent of lilac suffocated her. The past stabbed her. She knew what a paltry lie love was
“No,” she said.

C.W.



BOWLED OUT.

I WALKED the verandah of my bungalow on Moto Ko Buli plantation, Sarawaga river, island of Vanua Levu, Fiji, impatiently waiting dinner. It was longer than usual in coming, and more than once I had shouted to Lonea, the cook, to hurry up, receiving always the stereotyped answer, "*Io, saka, malua vakalailaie!*" ("Yes, sir, wait a little.")

Suddenly, after a longer pause than usual, Lonea bounced on to the verandah in a state of wild excitement. His eyes flamed and his breath came fast as he asked:

"Did you eat any of your curry, sir?"

"Eat any of the curry! How could I when you haven't given me a chance? But, see here, my friend, if it isn't on the table smartly, by the Lord I'll eat *you!*"

Utterly disregarding the terrible threat, Lonea only rapped out, with rising anger, "Then it's some of those — niggers!" (using the last epithet of contempt one "nig." can hurl at another).

"What's that? What have they been up to?"

"Eaten your curry! Come and see."

Now this was a serious matter, and with an energetic "The devil they have!" I followed Lonea to the *vale ni kuro*. There, sure enough, stood the dish of curry that would in its perfect state have adorned my table and progressed gently through my digestive apparatus—but what a wreck!

Half the contents of dismembered fowl had disappeared, and in the rampart of rice by which it had been surrounded there were unmistakable marks of the thievish fingers which had made free with the greater portion. My dinner was spoiled.

"Who did this?" I asked, wrathfully.

"I don't know, sir ; but one of those — Ra men, I think."

"Were they about here ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who ?"

"Masid, Taniela, Warri, Tioni, Radovo and Taviuni."

"Any in the kitchen ?"

"Not while I was here, sir."

"Well, you go to their *bure* and tell them all to muster on the verandah at once, if they don't want me after them ; and send me your chief, Rogo."

Tanna men are true as steel in a fight. They will stand to you like white men. Rogo came and quickly took my instructions, and I then went to make my own preparations for dealing with the culprit among the Ra men ; for this offence, combining theft, sacrilege and insult, had to be promptly avenged.

The Ra men were not long in answering the summons, and, having strapped on my revolver, I lined them up against the rail.

All were there ; twenty bronze figures perfectly nude but for the *sulu* around the loins.

Then Rogo and his ten Tanna men, fully armed, quietly appeared and took up a position at a little distance ; so that when I began my harangue on the enormity of the offence committed, and expressed my determination to discover and punish the culprit, the Ra men felt that I was in earnest.

I told them white men had means of detection about which ignorant *Ra Viti* knew nothing, and that I was bound to find out the thief. Of course, all loudly protested innocence and denounced the offender.

Then the *séance* commenced.

I first went down the line looking for curry sign, making each one open his mouth. The draw was not altogether a blank, but it afforded no positive proof.

"Now," I said, "I am going to show you how a white man finds out a thief, and woe to him who tells me lies."

Then, commencing with the first man, I clapped my hand on

his bare chest, over his heart, and sharply asked, "Did you eat my curry?"

"*Segai, saka, au bubului ki na Kalou dina au sega ni kunia.*" ("No, sir; I swear by the true God I did n't.")

"Did you? Did you? Did you?"—and the answer was repeated all down the line, while the heart-beat under my hand was but normal.

Then I came to Taviuni (so called because he had long lived on the island of that name). "Did you?"

"No, I swear——!" But the thump, thump, thump of his heart under my hand told a different story, changing suspicion into certainty; and he turned the yellowy-white colour of dirty fat as I thundered out—"You lie! Here, Lonea, bring me that *bilo*."

Lonea brought the cup in which I had prepared a gentle dose of ipecacuanha out of the medicine-chest.

"Now, drink this!"

At first, Taviuni refused, believing he was to be poisoned outright; but, by tasting it myself and showing him the revolver, I at last induced him to reconsider his decision.

He drank, and we all waited results. Presently he turned to go.

"Stop there!"

"*Au tauveimate, saka*" ("I'm unwell, sir.")

"All right—stop there."

"*Au via lua, saka!*"

"All right. *Lua* where you are!" And—ye gods!—he did.

There were one or two premonitory throes; then a mighty convulsion of the whole man; and—well, everybody soon knew who stole the curry.

The man's discomfiture was his sufficient punishment; but the story flew far and wide, and I became speedily famous as a mighty medicine-man on the strength of the way in which I bowled out Master Taviuni.

T. H. PRICHARD.

NELL'S LETTER.

SHE had been standing at the open door since her brother's early breakfast. The breakfast-things were still on the table, just as Bob had left them ; but her own tea was now cold, and her bread and bacon remained untasted. Before her lay the dreary panorama of ridge and gully, clothed with poverty-stricken gum-trees, which is common to the northern slopes of the Blue Mountains. The persistent monotony of the sky-line was broken only by the barren effort of Mount Hay towards individuality ; and at this distant land-mark Nell was frowning through the sunlight, her eyes set in an unseeing stare.

She was thinking about a letter. It was not one she had received, for she had never received a letter in her life ; but one she felt she must write. Was it not nearly six months since Jim had gone away ?—yet no word had come to her of his doings or intentions. It was nearly summer again, and she had told herself all along that with the summer Jim would certainly return. Not that she blamed Jim ; for it was absurd to suppose that Jim could know of her trouble, seeing that when he went away she did not know of it herself.

She passed her hand wearily over her brow, for she had been thinking deeply, and she was not used to thinking. She felt that the letter would be difficult to write. Of course it was for Jim—her hero, Jim—who never laughed at her blunders ; yet even with Jim it would be hard to choose her words. For Nell, though simple, was not stupid. She was instinctively modest ; and then she knew she must not hurt Jim's feelings, or say anything that might be taken as an appeal to his generosity. Because Jim was a gentleman, a real gentleman, whose words or actions must never be called in question.

So, having thought it all out in her own little way, Nell went inside and cleared away the breakfast-things. Then she took the bottle of violet ink, and the pink paper with the blue lines, and the ornamental pen with the impossible point. She spread them laboriously before her on the table, and sat down with her back to the light to accomplish an act of common justice to her lover. Pausing often for inspiration, she tried hard with her stiff little fingers to keep the wayward, spluttering pen within the limits ruled for it. Dip succeeded dip in the narrow-necked bottle, blush followed blush over her freckled face, sheet after sheet of the pink paper was spoilt and thrown aside; and before the task was done the afternoon had come and the writer was nearly exhausted. When her name was duly signed she rose and stretched her limbs, cramped by the unaccustomed labour. As she moved about the room, preparing for what should have been her mid-day meal, she was able to look back upon her efforts with something approaching complacency; having, as she hoped, explained the situation without affront either to Jim or to herself.

When she had taken some tea and food, she drew from her pocket a crumpled old envelope. It contained a collar-stud and other trifles, relics of Jim, and bore the address:

MR. JAMES O'LYON,
POST OFFICE,
COOKAWARRA.

This envelope she had found on the floor after one of Jim's visits. She had preserved it as a keepsake; but now it was the only link between her narrow life and the great outside world into which her lover had withdrawn.

So Nell copied the address upon a tinted envelope, tidied her wavy hair, and set out with her letter to the town, carrying an old shawl over her arm, though it was not cold and the sun was still high. It was with a feeling more nearly akin to happiness than she had enjoyed for some time, that Nell followed the winding track from the selection to the town and back again. That night she

prepared her brother's tea and endured his ill-humour with comparative serenity, comforted by the thought that everything would soon be right.

Six weeks had passed, yet no answer had come from Jim. In spite of herself, Nell was losing heart. Since the despatch of her letter, she had walked daily to the post-office to enquire for an answer; trudging the three miles and a half into the town with faint hopes, and the three miles and a half back again with ever-deepening despair. At first, on fine days, the walk was not unpleasant; but, as weeks went by and the sun grew hotter, the exertion began to tell upon her. Her head was always dizzy, and sleeplessness was wearing her down. There came a day when she fainted on the road, and lay some time unconscious. She crawled home with difficulty, and next morning she felt too weak to rise from bed.

So far, she had succeeded in hiding her trouble from her brother; but in her weakness and helplessness she made up her mind to face the worst, and tell Bob all about it. So the following morning, when Bob was breakfasting in moody silence, she commenced her faltering tale. It was some time before her brother grasped the situation; but when at length he did understand, he vented his passion in a torrent of abuse. He even struck her; for brutal and vulgar minds, when by accident they find themselves on the side of respectability, forego none of the privileges of the position. When he thought his taunts had begun to lose their sting he left her. On his return at night the house was empty. Nell was gone.

The train sped on through the night. It was just daylight when Nell, shaken and feverish, left the carriage at Cookawarra. For many hours she had not tasted food; her head throbbed; and she could scarcely stand. The station-master noticed her. "You seem ill, miss," he said; "would you like to sit down in the waiting-room for a few minutes?"

Nell thanked him, and turned to follow, then tottered and fell. When she came to, she was lying on a seat in the waiting-room, and the station-master was holding a glass of water to her lips. "Are you better now?" he asked kindly. "Yes, thank you," she said feebly. He left her for a moment, and returned, saying, "Sit still awhile, and rest yourself. I've brought you the paper to look at." She thanked him wearily and sat up. He went out, closing the door behind him, and when he had gone Nell took up the paper, and almost immediately her eye met this paragraph:

CAUGHT AT LAST.—When going to press we were credibly informed that, owing to the praiseworthy endeavours of Constable Bolger, the notorious swindler, James O'Lyon, has again been brought within reach of the law. He is now in the lock-up, and will be brought up at the police-court this morning. A full account of the proceedings will appear in our next issue.

With a terrible jump at her heart, Nell realised what this meant to her. She was helpless, homeless, almost penniless, and her darling Jim was in prison, charged with—she knew not what—some terrible mistake—of course the charge was false! But how long would it take for Jim to clear himself? And what should she do in the meantime? Instantly she made up her mind to go straight to the lock-up, and to see Jim, if only for a minute. Poor old Jim!

So she enquired her way from the friendly station-master, and slowly walked down the quiet street, gazing absently about her. At last she reached the lock-up. It stood by itself on the other side of the town—a rough, wooden building, bare and forbidding. A short distance away was the constable's house, enclosed within a neat fence along which honeysuckle grew thickly. Nell walked boldly in and knocked at the door. No one answered, and she knocked again. Still there was no answer, and Nell bethought herself that it was little past five o'clock. If she disturbed these people they would be offended, and she must avoid giving offence if she wished to see Jim. She walked aimlessly out through the gate, and round the corner of the honeysuckle hedge, casting many wistful glances at the lock-up. She would sit down and rest—her head ached so. She heard the distant jangling of cow-bells, the cry of magpies, and all the sounds of early morning, while from the honeysuckle over-

head came a perfume which she inhaled greedily. Then a drowsiness overtook her, and she slept.

Constable Bolger had been obliged to postpone the official overhauling of the prisoner's person, and it was about eight o'clock in the morning when he came out of the lock-up with a letter in his hand. It was, of course, the constable's duty to read over any papers found on a prisoner, so, bracing himself to carry out the work he had so well begun, he seated himself upon a comfortable garden chair beneath the honeysuckle hedge. Having carefully lighted his pipe and spread out his feet to the sun, he devoted his attention to the letter, which was queerly written on pink paper with blue lines, in wayward violet characters.

It is certainly a very funny composition, for Constable Bolger rolls about on his seat as though a fit were imminent. Now he has read it through, and looks round for someone with whom to share his enjoyment. Surely that is Banks—there, by the lamp-post! "Holloa there, Banks!" roars Bolger. "Coo-e-e! Come here; I want you."

Banks seems deaf, and the constable roars again. On the other side of the hedge a tired girl opens her eyes, and tries to rise. But her head is whirling—she seems to have no power over her limbs—she will lie down again—in a little while she will feel better.

"Now, then, just listen to this!" chuckles the constable when his friend is seated comfortably beside him. "Listen to this! 'My own, dear, beautiful Jim.' Eh? All right; it's only the cows. Never knew Jim O'Lyon, did you, Banks? 'My own, dear, beautiful Jim.' That's him in the lock-up now. He's a dear, beautiful daisy is Jim: but wait. 'I hope this finds you in as good health as it leaves me at present.' Hope it does, so help me three buck niggers! 'Since you went away it has been cold mostly O, Jim, what beautiful days them was before you went away.' My colonial troubles! Them was eight-hour days, them was! 'I'm not so happy as I was, because Bob does go on so with drinking and

swearing and such like, and there ain't no one to say what you used to say.' No; strike me ugly if they can any of 'em put it so genteel as the irresistible Jimmie! 'I lay awake at nights thinking of you know who.' O, my oath, Jim knows who right enough! 'O Jim, if you was here I could tell you, but writing ain't the same, somehow.' Ha, ha, ha! Why, what's the matter, man? What? Cry out? Why, it's only them cows laughin'. It would make a snake laugh! Sit down. It's nothing! Listen! 'But I've told no one that you love me.' James has her on a bit of whipcord this time, and no mistake. Just listen here! 'O, Jim, sometimes I think what mother would have said, but if she had known you she would say it was all right, 'cause you are a gentleman and knows best. But, O Jim, do come and see me again in summer same as you did before.' Not quite. Probably James will have other things to do this summer! 'With heaps of kisses.' Rows of 'em; just look! What! Going? Well, so long!" And Constable Bolger went inside.

On the other side of the fence a worn, pitiful figure lies still, very still. The cows are beginning to feel the growing power of the sun, and graze closer in the shadow of the honeysuckle. One great brindled beast comes and sniffs at the sleeping figure of the girl, then calmly crops a tuft of grass which her head is almost touching. She does not heed it; the hoarse, hollow sound of the bell upon its neck does not seem to disturb her slumber.

She lies so very still.

W. B. YOUNG.

JESSOP'S COAT.

JESSOP wore a new coat—a gorgeous garment bedecked with astrakhan, and beautified by moonlike buttons. It must have cost six pounds. Lucky, luxurious dog, Jessop!

Very different was the condition of Judson and Robins. They were two chronically moneyless bank-clerks, with a holiday, a “dead bird” for the Anniversary Handicap, and not a copper to back it with. Standing at a street corner they discussed the situation and every financial possibility, concluding reluctantly that they had neither cash nor credit. Suddenly Judson said :

“Look at this blessed Cræsus coming along!”

“Who?” queried Robins.

“Why, Jessop! with a coat on him like an Angora goat.”

With an air of envy and resentment, Judson and Robins watched the fine-feathered Jessop till he entered a lodging-house near by.

“I suppose we could n’t tap *him* again?” Robins murmured reflectively.

“Tap *him*! No, indeed! If Jessop does n’t know us no one does. But, by Jove! I’ve got an inspiration. We’ll borrow his coat.”

“You’re a genius, Judson, I know,” remarked Robins; “but I don’t see what good that would be to us on a sweltering day like this.”

“Could n’t we put it up the spout? Could n’t we get three or four quid on it? Could n’t we back Caravan with the stuff, make a ‘pony’ each, and redeem the coat after the race? Could n’t we, eh?” broke out Judson like a dynamited note of interrogation.

“We could, we could,” assented Robins, humbly; “but how ’ll

we get the coat? Jessop would know we had no need of it on a day like this."

"He wears it to show off. Why should n't one of us? But I've got a cat that will jump better than that."

Having thus sanely delivered himself, Judson's stock of sanity seemed exhausted, for he began to act in a way which Robins liked as little as he understood. First, he wet his hand in the gutter, then he made for it a sort of mud glove by diving it into the dust. That done, he deliberately printed a filthy impression of his paw fair in the centre of Robins' shirt-front. Robins was just about to move round and curse at large, when the eccentric Judson remarked:

"Now go and borrow Jessop's coat to hide your dirty shirt."

"Judson," said Robins, feelingly, "you are indeed a genius. Let us go together."

They went, and Jessop laughed very much at Robins' shirt-front, and said Judson was a wag. He was in a fine humour, and when Robins mentioned his wish to have a loan of *the* coat, Jessop said:

"Certainly, with the greatest of pleasure,"—and in a minute Robins was arrayed in half-a-hundredweight of coat.

"Are you fellows going into town?" said Jessop. They were in South Yarra.

"Er—yes!" said Judson, "we're going to walk." He thought that might deter Jessop, if he had a design to accompany them.

"Oh, I'll walk," said Jessop.

There was no escape, so Judson and Robins hypocritically ejaculated, "That's fine!"

Long before they got to town Robins felt the weight of Jessop's coat, and perspired freely. He, however, consoled himself with the prospect that they would soon get rid of Jessop, and, soon after, of his coat.

When they reached the city they all stood, Judson and Robins expecting that Jessop would go his way, and so determine theirs. They were, therefore, greatly perturbed when Jessop remarked, "Where are you fellows going to day?"

"Er—er," began Judson, desperately, "we were thinking of taking a stroll out to Coburg."

That classic and compulsory resort of Victoria's criminality is a distance of five miles from Melbourne, and Judson mentioned it with a view to Jessop's possible wish to join them. Great was the horror of the conspirators when Jessop said :

"Well, I've got nothing else to do to-day, I'll go with you."

To groan or make any other conventional demonstration would have been to betray themselves. They suffered, and Robins sweated, in silence. Their only hope was to get it over, dodge Jessop, pawn the coat, and rush away to Williamstown in time to back Caravan for the Handicap. They resigned themselves to Fate, and started upon the walk to which they had been so calamitously committed. Jessop was in jubilant spirits, and rallied his friends upon their sudden depression.

That tramp will live in the memory of Jessop, Judson, and Robins all their days, and it will be among their choicest reminiscences of earth when they meet in "the great Perhaps." For the first couple of miles poor Robins got the worst of it, with the result that Judson, simply through seeing another man in a more unpleasant plight than himself, gradually recovered his characteristic cheerfulness. Robins perspired and grew very bloody-minded under his affliction. He knew there was a creek at Coburg, and he commenced to plot a scheme whereby Jessop might be drowned in it. Several other murderous methods he discussed, mentally, while Jessop and Judson made jokes and laughed. His condition was truly dreadful, but it was beautifully and almost completely compensated by Providence.

A thunderstorm gathered. The relentless, roasting sun became veiled by heavy clouds big with their terrible triplets—flash, crash, and splash. There was a mighty kick-up, and the rain came down as if the River Jordan had found a crack in the sky. Robins revelled in it. Jessop's coat was watertight.

Jessop and Judson were dumb and depressed. Jessop was

particularly annoyed. He cast furtive glances at his coat, and once or twice seemed about to say something. At last he blurted out :

"Look here, Robins, I don't see why I should get wet through while you're keeping yourself dry with my coat. You might be gentleman enough to return it now that you see I have need of it."

"That be hanged !" retorted Robins. "You lent me the coat, and I want it as much as ever I did, and a great deal more."

This delighted Judson, who made remarks calculated to make the disputants very angry. They warmed up until Jessop said that Robins was "nothing but a low cad."

This was altogether too much for Robins, who impulsively took off the coat, flung it at Judson (who immediately put it on), and violently attacked Jessop. A fierce fight ensued, in which both belligerents got wet through, while Judson, cosy in Jessop's coat, looked on, acted referee, and immensely enjoyed himself. Finally, Jessop conquered, which perhaps was only just.

The elemental strife ceased almost simultaneously, and when the sun came out again the steamy exhalations from the soaked ground made the heat more oppressive than ever. Judson wished to return the coat to Robins. Robins could n't see it. He was covered with mud as a consequence of his combat with Jessop, but as they were in the country he did not mind that. Nothing would induce him to again wear the infernal coat in such an atmosphere. It looked as if there would be another fight, when a friend of Judson's came along driving a covered waggonette, and offered them a lift to town. This they joyfully accepted, and soon were once more in Melbourne.

The necessity to get rid of Jessop was as strong with Judson and Robins as ever, and Jessop unexpectedly came to their relief. He said he was going to have a shave, and asked if they would come in and wait. They went and watched Jessop get lathered. As soon as he was thus secured Judson slipped out. Robins followed.

At last they were free, and they hurriedly repaired to a pawnshop. Judson took charge of the delicate business, and when safe

within the curtained recess he exhibited the coat with the usual formula. The Hebrew proprietor closely examined the garment, and then turned and ran his swivel eye down the stolen-property list. Then he called out "Nebuchadnezzar!" and a juvenile Jew came, to whom the ancient one whispered a mission.

The unsophisticated Judson and Robins regarded all this as business, and were patient.

At last the pawnbroker asked them, "Vadt you vandt on de goat?"

"Four pounds is a fair thing, I think!" returned Judson.

Thereupon followed the inevitable haggling, which was harshly interrupted by the entrance of two policemen, who exchanged a few words with the Jew and then took the excessively-protesting Judson and Robins in charge for "larceny of the Chief Justice's coat." This was, in two senses, "a bolt from the blue," and gladly would the astonished adventurers have made it so in a third by a bold dash for freedom. But that was put out of the question by each constable seizing his man by the collar and running him to the lock-up.

Judson and Robins were grievously pained by this indignity. They thought of Caravan. They also thought of Jessop, and wondered in what mysterious fashion his coat was connected with that of the Chief Justice. This suggested to Judson the idea of sending for Jessop and getting him to explain. He accordingly detailed to the sergeant a statement of how they had borrowed the coat from Jessop, who had given them permission to pawn it. The sergeant listened with that incredulous air which does much to create an impression of official wisdom in the minds of an awed public, and, with lightning rapidity based a "theory" upon the prisoners' story. He decided that Jessop was an accomplice in the heinous crime of stealing the Chief Justice's coat, and, having obtained his address from the too-confiding Judson, promptly ordered his arrest.

In due course Jessop joined his former companions of the day, who explained that they had been walking along the street when

the policeman arrested them. In return, Jessop narrated how he had been struck with the Chief Justice's coat and had obtained one exactly like it. This Judson and Robins rather resented, and they reproached Jessop with having indulged his vanity in a direction which had brought them to such trouble.

What might have been the fate of the unfortunates is not nice to surmise. What did happen is painful to relate. It gave the sergeant such a shock that he had to be pensioned shortly afterwards. Standing at the watch-house door and looking along the street he saw, being hustled along by a constable, but vigorously resisting and protesting, that Holy of Holies—the Chief Justice. None other.

The sergeant, however, had his duty to perform, and with every expression of pain he enquired the charge.

"Larceny of the Chief Justice's coat, which he is at present wearing," quoth the last man to join; and the sergeant sank down upon a seat and begged to be excused.

There was no need for the learned and outraged dignitary to explain. The sergeant divined all. The coat had been recovered and restored to its owner, who upon again wearing it had been run in by the raw recruit.

It took a great deal to pacify the big gun of the law, but he finally departed in peace. Shortly afterwards, Jessop, Judson and Robins were released, Jessop keeping possession of his coat; and in much amazement at the ways of the law they went home.

That night Judson and Robins read in the evening papers how Caravan had been beaten by a bare head. Then they silently shook hands, and as one man blessed the frustration of their plot to hypothecate "Jessop's Coat."

JOHN B. CASTIEAU.

A STEP TOO HIGH.

TE PAREHAO was a Maori chief, and Te Parehao had something on his mind. He made no sign, and worked away with spade and spear among the gum-diggers as if his thoughts were as tranquil as usual. Toward afternoon, though, when chance threw him alone with Herewini, the oldest, and therefore the most respected chief in Taiere, he made known his trouble quietly, and asked advice.

Herewini was grieved beyond measure when he heard ; but he alone could not give counsel in a case like this, he must consult the other rangatiras of the settlement.

The meeting took place at dusk in Herewini's own whāri. Five chiefs, all of high rank, were present. They sat silently round a fire in the middle of the floor, spitting into the coals. Te Parehao, the sixth chief, and the one chiefly interested, was late in arriving ; but he came at last and squatted quietly by the fire. Then Herewini's voice called on him to make known the cause of this meeting ; and the listeners moved from the fire a little, and regarded Te Parehao expectantly.

He introduced himself warrior fashion, then reminded them that he had been husband four months to a woman who was very pleasing to the eye ; that she went away only yesterday to see her friends, who lived some two miles past the pakeha's house ; and that it was a moonlight night last night. Very well. He felt solitary, and went out. He walked, he walked a long way, and at last the home of the only white man in Taiere was before his eyes. Then was he coming back, but he saw through the trees a man and woman going along to the house. Ah ! these chiefs of high blood before him would feel sick with shame, for the woman was she to whom he

had been married four months : the man was that wicked pakeha ! Well, they went in, and he waited and waited ; and the moon had gone down, and it was near the rising of the sun when the woman came out of the house and went back to the home of her friends, two miles away. That was all his *korero*, and he would ask the wise men present what was to be done.

An old chief cleared his throat and spat impressively into the fire. He had a few observations to make. In the first place, the white man's punishment should be great, because he expected too much. Not only did they allow him two girls to keep house and wash, but he frequently came and spent hours in the society of other women, and wrong was not thought of it. And now—a chief's wife!—that was a step too high. Those were all his words.

The next gentleman agreed with all his learned friend had said. He suggested a form of punishment which, under similar circumstances, has suggested itself to many nations, and waited. An older chief did not think the mode severe enough. What did the others think ? They left it in the hands of the chief whose honour had been injured. Would Te Parehao speak ?

Yes ; he wanted the life of the white man and his mistress that night. As for the kind of punishment proposed—no, Te Parehao would sooner butcher the white man outright. Plenty of supple-jacks he would take to lash the two together ; and he wanted help to drag them to the coast. The sea was big—the sea might wash out their stain. First he would go to the house of the white man, and tie him up ; then away to where the woman was, and ask her to come home. The rest would be easy. Who would help him ?

Two of the strongest offered their services at once.

It was moonlight, and nine o'clock ; and the premises of Joseph Mackerrow, storekeeper, had been closed for two or three hours. The owner himself had been out in the moonlight half-an-hour ago, but he had gone in, and now there was no light in the place. No light, and no one about.

Hush ! Was not that a woman who walked quickly up in the

pale moonlight toward the door, and opened it, and went in? And what of three figures that lay in the shadow of a clump of blackish-trunked manuka trees huddled together near the house? It was hard to see them, no matter how you peered.

It must have been half-an-hour after the woman went in when these figures got up and approached the door noiselessly. It was unlocked, and in they went without a sound, each carrying a bundle of split supplejacks.

Then everything was inanimate again.

Time passed. The place was now in shadow, now lit up, and again in shadow, as a few clouds straggled across the moon. When at length all was clear, and she looked down, the three chiefs were out in front of the house once more; and on the ground near them a man and woman lay in each other's arms, lashed together in half-a-dozen places. They formed a picture that seemed to please Te Parehao's idea of revenge; for he regarded them often, and occasionally even spoke to the woman in Maori, to the man in broken English.

His wife of four months shed tears, only to be jeered at; and the gum-merchant was fast going into stupor—partly through fear, and partly because the tight binding was beginning to affect his circulation.

They made too heavy a load to drag, so their captors decided upon securing the services of a cart-horse. And then another delicate question took a few minutes' consideration. Te Parehao wished to hook the traces in some loops of the supplejack binding, and perform the journey without a sledge. His companions remonstrated; he would have no satisfaction when he reached the coast. The way was rough, and it would kill them. Te Parehao gave in reluctantly. When all was ready to start, he stated his intention of doing the rest of the work alone; rubbed noses with his two assistants; and started on his way merry as a chief should be who is enjoying a thoroughly satisfactory revenge.

The moon had done three-fourths of her night's journey when he reached the coast, and the strong salt air came pleasantly up over

the cliffs into his nostrils. He estimated the number of capsize on the way to be three. He never looked back ; but he heard the thud when the sledge struck anything and turned over, and the groans mingling with the traces' rattle when the load possibly caught against a stump, or helped the sledge over a boulder. Then, when the horse became quieter, he guessed the sledge had got into its proper position again.

At the commencement of a steep incline, that led down to a steeper cliff, Te Parehao stopped. He walked to the very edge and looked coolly over.

"Good enough," he said ; and came back to relieve the sledge of its load.

Then he uttered an exclamation. Either the supplejacks binding the two necks had worked loose, or the man's neck was broken, for the head had slipped down and rested on the shoulder of the woman, whose eyes looked up now—not into her lover's, but into her husband's. There was still life in her.

"Spare me," she pleaded weakly, in the native tongue. "The man you would kill with me is already dead. Let me go ; and forget that you married me. I will go away ; only let me live—let me live until my turn comes to die."

For answer, Te Parehao lifted her partner's head and placed the face against hers.

"Kish !" he said ; "one good long kish."

She did not speak, but when the head slipped to the side again, her eyes turned on Te Parehao with reproach, and the lower part of her face was smeared with blood—blood not her own.

"Here ! here !" said the chief. "Sure you no sham ?" and he turned the pakeha's face up.

Sham or no sham, one eye was glassy ; and where the other should have been there was a simple hole. Blood ran from the mouth, and clotted blood ran from the beard.

"Ha ! Never mind !"—and Te Parehao proceeded to undo the fastenings that bound the man and woman to the sledge. It did not take long.

"See!" and he pointed down the sloping bank, two hundred feet below the edge of which the sea lay, glistening invitingly under the moon. "Quick way you go hell, eh? Me gi' you good shtart"—and he began rolling them over. Five or six turns sufficed; then they kept on without assistance, and he stood and watched the result. Presently the pace became hot; and first the woman, then the man, was uppermost, whirling over and over and hurrying to the edge.

It was days afterwards, and the sea rolled in lazily. On the sand, a flock of birds of all sorts and conditions; in the water, sometimes out of sight, sometimes almost wholly to be seen, as each wave curled over, something which interested these birds greatly. A mermaid floating on her back with her lover in her arms? Perhaps so. At any rate, an old and dissipated-looking bird, watching with the crowd, turned to his better half and winked; at which she looked the other way, as a girl who blushes modestly. Yet, when the waves had done with the two bodies, she was among the first to waddle hungrily for a closer inspection.

MAX MERROLL.



DIES IRAE.

IT was some millions of years after the great Judgment Day. Satan had been sleeping, and when he awoke he felt somewhat chilly.

"Confound those imps!" he exclaimed, "I believe they've let the fires down a bit. A more careless set of devils I never had to do with in all my eternity. I'll give them particular sheol for this."

As he spoke he touched the electric bell, and a few seconds afterwards a trapdoor in the floor fell open, and a devil, burnt to a rich terra-cotta by the eternal fires, shot into the presence of the Lord of Hell.

"How now, sir?" thundered the potentate; "do you think hell was meant to be an ice-house, that you let the fires down so low? You seem to have mistaken your vocation. The whole stoking department ought to have been angels with white robes and crowns of glory. What do you mean by it, anyhow?"

The stoker-devil trembled like a leaf. "May it please your majesty," he said, "it isn't really our fault; the fact is, we are running out of fuel."

"What!" roared Satan, "running out of fuel, with the whole universe to draw on?"

"We've been using ten constellations a minute for the last three million years," explained the stoker; "and now the supply has given out. We kept the Milky Way till the last, hoping against hope, but this week we had to use it. We are running the furnaces now with the Magellan Clouds, but the quality is none of the best, and we'll want a fresh supply in a few hours."

"Search the ends of Space then!" exclaimed Satan; "there must surely be any quantity of constellations left."

The stoker-devil shook his head sadly. "We've used 'em all up," he replied. "Our cinder-heap reaches to the farthest depths."

"Search that cinder-heap then!" cried Satan; "plenty of suns and constellations may have been thrown out carelessly."

"No," replied the stoker-devil despondently; "during the last million years the ashes have been carefully sifted, and all burnable parts have been returned to the furnaces."

Satan ground his mighty teeth in despair. "This comes of damning too many souls," he exclaimed. "I begin to think that I was far too active in the old days. If I had had any foresight at all I'd have let the parsons save all the souls they wanted. Here I am brought to beggary in my old age—burnt out of house and home by a lot of miserable souls who have not the common decency to thank me for giving them the chance. But I will not submit; I'll strain the universe through a hair-sieve before I give up the game. Here, you!—turn out ten thousand of those Australian miners we damned in the nineteenth century. Tell 'em to prospect all Space. Tell them I'll give threepence each for planets, and ninepence each for suns—in asbestos orders good for whisky at the refreshment-room. And, while they are routing around, I'll see what I can find on my own account."

At once the message clanged throughout hell, but before the order could be carried out Satan took a header into the depths, on a quest of his own. In a few seconds thousands of eager souls swarmed out on to the clinker-heap. There they were, gaunt and grim, seared by millions of years of searching fires, grilled for ages on the unmelting fire-bars of the inferno, racked and torn by the tireless torturers, and hideously disfigured by a thousand endless and unimaginable torments. But there they stood with the old prospecting fever still strong within them, and before them lay the biggest prospecting field ever offered to the sons of men. There lay an apparently duffered-out universe, with just a chance that somewhere in it were constellations every sun of which was worth a drink in the private bar of hell; and so, with a whoop that shook the grim portal of the inferno, they dashed into Space.

But little they reckoned of the task before them. For days they wandered, that troop of disconsolate diggers, and many a billion miles they prospected without success. At last, when the search seemed almost hopeless, something huge and filmy hove in sight on the great black wall of starless Space. With a simultaneous rush the prospectors went for it, and, hooking themselves on by every available point, they dragged it, with a wild hurrah, through billions of miles of emptiness till they triumphantly dumped it at hell's gate, and sent it bodily down into the furnaces.

A stoker-imp rose up and thanked them, with tears in his eyes.

"Just in time, oh, just in time!" he exclaimed, in broken accents. "The weather prophet in the third gridiron has prophesied a white frost."

But suddenly a mighty form spun up from the exterior darkness. It was Satan, returned from a fruitless search.

"I hear the roar of the furnaces," he said; "what have you found?"

They told him.

"‘A filmy thing, floating in Space.’ Oh, fools!" he cried, "you have gone and burnt up Heaven. It won't last ten minutes. We are lost!"

And, sure enough, fifteen minutes later Hell froze over.

E. J. DEMPSEY.



UNDER THE ROSE.

O H, all you happy lovers ! who may acknowledge one another before the world : have a pity for us the outcasts, who must meet and vow eternal constancy in secret, whose love prudence or morals forbids. Your path is so smooth ; you sit in snug drawing-rooms, and discreet coughs announce the approach of intruders. Everyone smiles on you and approves of you. We must descend to artifice, stratagem, and ruse. We advertise in the "missing friends" column, or hide letters in a log or a tree. You run to meet the postman, and smile openly and happily over love's eloquence. You are artless, frank, sincere. We—well, never mind what we are ; the words sound harsh.

" We loved, sir—used to meet :
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But, then, how it was sweet ! "

We meet by the grass-grown banks of a swift little creek, and from the shelter of tall bracken and rushes glance guiltily now and again over our shoulders—at what ? A cow or a horse. And we scarcely dare whisper as we presently approach the homestead, and part under the shelter of that kindly old white gum. Or away on some lonely road, with not a habitation in sight, where the acres of dim country seem to slip into the far horizon under the moon ; the horses tied to the wire fence crop the grass, and the sheep, huddled together, bleat now and again, and we start, fearing someone.

Or down by a cliff near the sea, the stars tracking a pathway across the water, which rises and falls, and whispers a crooning song to the gleaming line of sand.

Or the city ; poor lovers when it is the city ! It is hard to find nooks for lovers in the city. In the big, kind country, when the

night falls, we have the wide miles and each other. Yet even the busy streets become dear when we have trodden them side by side, and the glamour falls over all that is prosaic and humdrum. But the marvellous charms of those secret meetings, the hair-breadth escapes from discovery, the dear jeopardy into which Love leads us,—they are something you can never know, happy lovers! Does not the very openness and smoothness of your path render it commonplace! Do you value the prize so easily obtained? Do you really know what Love is? But what true lovers have not believed that to them alone has been revealed the length, depth, breadth, height and vastness of Love?

We used to think we knew it all; even though we might not confess to each other, there were times when we believed we had reached the perfect happiness. Life had been cruel, would continue cruel, but Love had given all, and you whispered, “If Death would come now!”

But he did not come, and it has all gone far into the past, and we are humdrum, middle-aged people, and have not seen one another for twenty years. If Death had come then, it would have been better. Poor lovers!

There was a row of pines away across the paddock, and one slipped with stockinged feet along the verandah where the boards creaked, and down the lane so quietly, then past the sheds where a tall poplar dropped leaves that crackled underfoot. If there was a moon one kept close to the straggling hawthorn hedge, pausing with rapid pulse to listen if anyone was near;—what miles it seemed when every step was fraught with danger, and each movement was made with deliberate caution! Then across the strip of open where white logs lay on the ground, and one lingered fearfully by stump and tree, past the clump of saplings where sometimes hung a grave native-bear; the tall, pale grass on each side stretching away in soft, indistinct waves. Then at last in the shelter of the pines, the dry ground beneath strewn with pine-needles, and the branches above murmuring a song they long ago taught ships to sing

at sea. Perhaps the tall masts were stalwart pines in their youth, and can never forget the forest-song which sweeps through solemn chant, murmuring dirge, requiem, lullaby, then swells into sonorous peal and blast of mad triumph or despair.

One leaned against an old brown bole with its warm, resinous smell, listened and started at the falling of a twig; across the quiet night came the far bark of a dog, the whirring of a cricket, the *womp! womp!* of frogs in the dam, and blended with all the whisper and croon of the pines. At last you would come, your steps indistinct,—a moment of doubt,—then coming rapidly nearer. Then . . . well, you who are lovers know what then.

What a soft cushion pine-needles make! What a still, peaceful world we looked out on from the shadow while we talked of ourselves, and our love, and the risks we ran, or did not talk at all—and often that was best. The minutes that dragged in a very eternity of time while we were apart, were hurrying into an hour when we were together.

“I was afraid you could not come.”

“I could not have stayed; my heart was beating in a very madness of longing for you.”

“Do they suspect, do you think?”

“I daresay. I do not care *now*.”

A light twinkles far off—it is the home of a newly-wed pair.

“Ah, my dear—shall we ever . . . What is to be the end of it all?”

“I dare n’t think of it. I only live for the present, and from one meeting to another.”

“Did you hear my step?”

“Yes—far off. At first I thought it was only the pulse in my ears, but it came nearer, and you are here.”

Well, it is all past now; hot clasp, passionate kisses, clinging arms. Judge not too harshly, happy lovers! We break our hearts, you see, and must lie and play the hypocrite, and meet by stealth; and we try to do what is right very often, but, though you may not

believe it, there are circumstances in which it is impossible to tell what is right. And Love is stronger than anything but Death, and perhaps it is stronger than Death also. Some day we shall know.

Meanwhile we meet by stealth, and some of us do our best in a hard place, and some of us don't ; and when we suffer we wonder vaguely why Love and "morals " are so often opposed. Yet, if you are severe to those whom Love tempts too cruelly, you must also give credit to those—and they are not few—who withstand, and break their hearts. But, as they are probably broken either way, it does not matter much.

F. F. ELMES.



THE FUNERALS OF MALACHI MOONEY.

A NUMBER of Bungaree farmers, called from the fields, stood bare-headed about the sick-bed in attitudes of grievous constraint. Mrs. Mooney, seated on a low stool, wept sluice-heads, with wailing and querulous protestations. She had been replenishing the fountain of tears with whisky, and now cherished a great grievance against Malachi for dying, and the time chosen, and the manner thereof.

"There's hwhisky by the jar, min," said the dying man in a thin wheeze. "Be dhrinkin'."

Hogan gravely assumed authority over the jar, and filled up for the company with judicial impartiality.

"Good luck to ye, Mullocky!" said Hogan, raising his cup.

Malachi waved his thin hand in expostulation. He was beyond all chances of fortune in this world, and knew it. Hogan temporised.

"Good luck to ye, Mullocky, fwhere ye're goin'."

"How dar' ye doi, Mooney—how dar' ye do id?" wailed Mrs. Mooney, throwing her apron over her head, and rocking her body to and fro.

The company drank with one action, quite military in its precision, and then looked towards Malachi Mooney for further orders, and Malachi lay peacefully, happily dead with a smile on his lips, and the half-drained mug in his wasted fingers.

"Oh, ye divil! t'be dyin' on me like dthis," moaned Mrs. Mooney under her apron. "I'm disaved in yeh, Mooney! disaved! disaved! Whurra whroo!"

Presently, perceiving that Malachi was beyond argument, she lifted up her voice and filled the house with dolorous cries, and

wailed dutifully and monotonously far into the night, when the chant was taken up by eerie, wrinkled old crones, smoke-dried grandmothers lent for the occasion by sympathetic families from the four quarters of the wilderness.

What a wake that was! It lasted all night, and right up to the time fixed for the funeral. There was no end to the willing drinkers, and no limit to the whisky. Indeed, the miraculous manner in which tiny kegs, loaded to the bung, rolled from under the bed on demand, confirmed the local opinion that "Mullocky" Mooney had more than a finger in the snug still, the smoke from which curled so artfully up from a charred trunk on Peter's Hill, and was thoughtfully given a supernatural origin by the neighbourly people of the district.

The funeral was advertised to move from the home of deceased at ten a.m. sharp. It was a long march to the Ballarat old cemetery, and an early start was deemed necessary in consideration of the fact that Hooley's funeral, which happened a month earlier, had been fined for furious driving, by reason of the anxiety of the mourners to reach the graveyard before closing time.

The vehicles began to arrive at seven in the morning, the farmers and settlers driving, and their wives and "childer" loaded in behind. A funeral was a "trate" that didn't happen every day, and it would have been considered a sin to deprive the "byes" and "gurrlls" of a bit of "enjymint" that cost nothing. But many of the mourners had been at Mooney's all night, "kapin' the corpse company," and daybreak disclosed a baker's dozen scattered about the farm, sleeping where they fell. One hung over the dog-leg fence "forninst" the house, like an old shirt, with down-swinging arms. Canty, recumbent against the butt-end of a gum, rigid as a stump, slept so profoundly that the old guttural Brahmapootra had perched on his bald and awful head, and was defying creation with senseless repetitions of a cracked clarion. Others reposed curled against the house, and several dotted the paddock like quaint hieroglyphics, objects of wonderment and noisy speculation to the familiar pigs.

Michael Morrissey was the first to drive up. Michael was to occupy an honourable and responsible position at the head of the procession. He had generously offered the use of his trap as hearse, and it was appropriately draped for that solemn office. This vehicle was an American waggon, and it had been roofed over about two feet from the floor, and was ordinarily used for the conveyance of meat ; Michael being a butcher. There was a door at the back, and just room within for Mooney's coffin. Quinn's trotter, The Imp, was in the shafts. The Imp had been borrowed for the occasion because he was the only black horse in the district ; but although his complexion was satisfactory, his disposition quite unsuited him for so grave a duty. He was old and had a semi-bald tail ; but there was a peculiar and aggressive jauntiness about the beast altogether out of harmony with his years and the situation in which he found himself. He held his head high, and pricked his ears, and his tail had a perky elevation that exhibited the bald butt to the worst advantage, and excited popular derision wherever he went.

When the friends of the late Malachi Mooney arrived, they walked reverently into the room where Malachi lay still on the bed amidst his monumental candles, and gazed on him for a moment with pensive sadness, as in duty bound.

"Pore mahn, he have the peaceful shmile on him !"

"He have, he have !"

After repeating the sentiment several times, with nodding heads and much wise clicking of tongues, thus having paid their respects to the dead, they withdrew to the kitchen, and devoted themselves to the whisky.

The coffin had been delivered, and stood on two bush stools in the kitchen, decently covered with a black shawl. Mrs. Mooney sat at the foot, adjacent to a pannikin, and continued to upbraid Mooney for his inconsiderate conduct in dying, and "lavin' a lone lorn widdy."

The funeral moved at eleven, when it was quite certain that only one baby keg remained. This keg Morrissey took with him on

the improvised hearse, as a wise provision for the first half of the journey, which lay through a barren land.

Many of the mourners had to be helped into their vehicles, and after the start many remained in only by a miracle. Morrissey led the way, The Imp stepping along with a frivolous kind of a four-footed jig that robbed the cortège at the outset of any pretence to dignity. O'Connor's old waggonette followed, O'Connor driving carefully, strapped down; and Mrs. O'Connor and the "widdy" occupying the back seat. Then came Clark in his spring-cart, driving The Imp's rival, Colleen. After him two or three miscellaneous vehicles, and then a long string of wood drays, each in charge of an unnaturally rigid and solemn Irishman perched on a candle box, and each containing one or two women and three or four children, the former squatting composedly on the bottom of the dray with their substantial feet swinging out behind. A dozen sleepy, unshaven, unshorn agriculturists brought up the rear, riding two abreast on large, morbid horses that shuffled moodily through the dust with drooped heads and sagging under-lips.

The women in the drays maintained a shrill conversation along the line, but for the most part the men observed an owl-like decorum until the Travellers' Rest was reached,—that is, if the puffing of abbreviated black clays be not considered derogatory from true reverence. Meanwhile, the day being hot and the way dusty, a couple of short halts had served to drain the keg on the hearse. It was a gritty, drought-stricken funeral that descended upon the Travellers' Rest, and when it moved again it left the wayside inn as dry as a powder-mill, having drunk up everything in the bar, and demolished the water-butt.

And now a great spirit of unrest took possession of many of the mourners, and there was much whooping and many manifestations of a wild and unholy desire to convert the procession into something like a steeplechase. The Imp was stepping out gaily with his deceitful double-shuffle, game as a pebble, despite his age and infirmities, but it was Clark with Colleen who led the break-away.

Springing up with a whoop and whooroo, Clark whipped his mare alongside the hearse.

"Morrissey," he cried, "I can bate that bumble-footed ould crock to the Pint beyant fer tin bob!"

"Ye can't!" roared Morrissey, all the sportsman stirring within him.

"Ye loi!" Clark fairly shrieked, laying the whip on.

Michael lashed The Imp, and the veteran, scenting a contest, snorted defiance, and hit out with all four afflicted legs at once. Then, bounding over ruts, jumping the boulders, rocking and rearing, the two vehicles went thundering through the dust, Colleen leading and The Imp following, flinging wide his legs with the action of a startled tarantula as he rushed down the hill, his body working with the antic spasms of two pigs in a bag.

The other drivers flogged their stolid horses into unwonted activity, and in this way the mad funeral, strung out a mile long, tore through one affrighted township, scattering sows and sucklings, goats, dogs, poultry, and shrieking children, raising a dust that blotted out half the landscape, and filling men and women with a wonderment that lasted many days. Half a mile beyond, The Imp, with a triumphant tail and starting eyeballs, flung past the Colleen with a rush and a roar, neatly carrying away Clark's near wheel, which went humming ahead down the well-worn track.

Morrissey obtained control over his blood horse and succeeded in pulling up about a mile further on, and there he waited for the rest of the funeral in a humble and contrite frame of mind. The procession arrived in sections, the heavy horses spent and reeking, and the mourners coated thickly with powdered clay that caked rapidly in the sun on their perspiring faces. The women, particularly the stout ones, tumbled and bumped out of all knowledge and restraint, were loud and fierce in their complainings; and the men agreed that it was "ondacent" and "agin religion" to conduct a funeral at a hard gallop. So Michael led away again, holding his trotter hard, and proceeded as reverently and demurely as possible with such a horse and so much whisky.

Matty Clark was reported unharmed, and busy fixing a skid in place of the lost wheel. It was expected that he would turn back, and be no more a disturbing element in his neighbour's funeral.

The procession travelled into the outskirts of Ballarat without any further misadventure. In fact, most of the drivers and several of the ladies were asleep, and the weary plough-horses drowsed along at their own gait. The Imp, in spite of the apparent sprightliness of his action, was a very slow walker, for the reason that he generally dropped his hoofs in almost the spots from which he had just lifted them, and sometimes behind.

But at this point, cries of warning and of wonderment and disgust ran along the line, and looking back, Morrissey beheld Matty Clark in the distance, erect in his cart, gesticulating like a maniac, and rapidly overhauling the funeral. Matthew had fixed a sapling under his trap for a skid, and on this and one wheel he presently rattled up alongside the hearse again, oblivious to the threats and expostulations of the mourners.

"Mike Morrissey, ye divil ye!" yelled Mat, red, panting, and furious, "to the cemmethry fer a quid!"

"Niver a won av me," replied Morrissey, hanging on to The Imp.

"Yis, be the powers!" roared Clark, shooting ahead, and slashing viciously at the hearse-horse as he passed.

Michael clung to the reins, and hauled with all his might, but The Imp was not to be denied. Squealing shrilly in reply to the challenge, he broke into his old, ungainly, link-motion combination of canter, amble and trot, and spread himself all over the road in pursuit of Colleen.

A couple of horsemen put their nags to a gallop to head-off Matty Clark, and in this way the funeral broke in upon Ballarat, careering down Humphrey-street, and stirring the city to its depths.

Fortunately Colleen was headed just before reaching the main thoroughfare, and Daly and O'Mara seized upon Matty, who was a small, bristly Hibernian, and fought like a peccary. They got him

down and tied him up. Then, after throwing their turbulent captive into the cart, O'Hara sat on his chest and led the horses, and Daly, driving Colleen, now blown and humbled, took up a subordinate position at the tail of the procession ; while the funeral, which had paused to collect itself once more, moved on, followed by a delighted crowd of children and many envious adults.

Many astonishing funerals had come up out of Bungaree into Ballarat East, but Malachi Mooney's funeral was the most weird and wonderful that ever invaded any town on the Australian continent, and news of it seemed to have electric passage through the place. The improvised hearse with the well-intentioned effort to rig a pair of plumes of cock's feathers upon it, the strange, jocund horse that hauled it, and the great, red, clayed-up, hairy, wild-eyed Galway man driving, were alone sufficient to have brought the whole population into Bridge-street ; but with the added attractions—the awful procession of drays, their dusty, kiln-dried occupants, and the last vehicle riding jauntily on its skid, the funeral simply stopped business, took possession of the town, and drew the people after it in crowds.

Morrissey had the reins wound about his wrists, and with his heels dug in, his eyes protruding, and all his faculties intensely concentrated, hung to The Imp. The matrons still swung their stout feet, and here and there a worn-out mourner slept in his dray,—Heffernan and Moore with their heads suspended over the tail and their mouths open. The police followed too, and eyed the procession dubiously, half-inclined to arrest the whole funeral ; but by exercising the severest self-restraint and the greatest caution the mourners contrived to pull through, and arrived at the cemetery at half-past four, with the coffin in good order and condition.

After the usual preliminaries, the coffin was carried to the graveside by four of the late Mooney's most intimate friends, and, considering all things, their progress down the path was not as devious as might have been expected, but they landed the pine casket with a dump that produced the greatest sensation of the day. The coffin lid had not been screwed down, and it slipped to one side,

making a revelation. There were many cries and much commotion when it was seen that the coffin contained packages of sugar and tea and miscellaneous groceries, and nothing more. Malachi Mooney was not there! Consternation sat whitely on every face, and the women crossed themselves vigorously.

"He's bin shpirited away!" wailed the "widdy."

"Did annywon see us dthrop him?" asked the dazed Morrissey in a small, awed voice.

Flynn now remembered that he had packed the groceries in the coffin the day before. He it was who carted the casket out from Ballarat; and, having goods to carry at the same time, he packed them into the "piner" for "convanience," and by reason of the thirst that came upon him and possessed him for two days "disremimbered ivirything aftherwards."

In truth the late Malachi Mooney still lay undisturbed upon the bed in his humble home in Bungaree, and the last of the yard-long candles guttered in the brass-sockets at his head. *The corpse had been forgotten!*

And this is how Malachi Mooney came to have two funerals.

EDWARD DYSON.



JUDAS: A STRIKE INCIDENT.

JUDAS! Here he comes—"Judas, the traitor!"

He passed among them with downcast head, glancing fearfully from side to side at the ominous, lowering faces. All reviled him; the women spat upon him; several of the men attempted to strike him. It was all the two policemen could do to save him from the fury of the crowd. Presently stones began to fly. Most of them passed wide of the mark, but one of them found its billet. He reeled as the missile struck him; then, recovering himself, he broke from his escort, and rushed wildly down the narrow street, followed by a shower of stones and curses, and the execrating shouts of "Judas! Judas!"

It was the time of a great strike. The strikers knew not the curse of their heritage as they battled against starvation with ever-dwindling strength.

It was reserved for one man to bring it home to them—one of their own number—a traitor—Judas! He was the first to fail, as he had been the last to join them. In going back to the yoke and pittance, he paved the way for others to follow, one by one, until it seemed as if the long slow weeks of suffering and self-sacrifice had been once more in vain.

Can you wonder that they hated him? And the Law of the land—the Law which put forth all its powers to thrust them back into the abyss—can you wonder that they hated that too, and rebelled against it?

And *he*, the traitor? Ah, these are not merely the execrations of a handful of betrayed brethren that greet him to-night: they are

the voices of unborn generations which send up, as he slinks along, that universal shout of "Judas ! Judas !"

Later he stands hatless, beneath a lamp in the deserted street. His face is smeared with blood where the stone struck him. He has had more than one bitter experience this evening. Soon after he escaped from his pursuers he staggered, sick and faint, into a hotel. The bar was filled with men, many of whom were strikers, though he failed to notice them till it was too late to retreat. He reeled to the counter.

"Give me some brandy, quick," he said, "for the love of God !"

The bottle was passed to him in silence. The room had been filled with clamour when he entered ; now an ominous silence prevailed. He would have given worlds to search the assemblage for one pitying, relenting face ; but he dared not lift his eyes. He hastily swallowed the spirit and thrust a coin across the counter. Then a voice was heard.

"What, Hennessy, would you touch his cursed silver—blood money ?"

The publican hesitated. His sympathies were with the men on strike, yet he could not help feeling some faint sense of pity for the abject wretch before him. But pity at times is an unprofitable sentiment. He flicked the coin back again.

"No," he said, "he has had the drink ; but I will not touch his money !"

"Curse you !" cried the hunted wretch, as he shivered the glass upon the floor. "Oh, curse you all !"—and he rushed from the place, followed by derisive laughter.

He is recalling the scene now, as he stands beneath the street-lamp, with the rain pattering upon his uncovered head.

"My God !" he cries, "I cannot stand this much longer."

Later still. He is walking, he knows not whither, although the street seems familiar. In truth he is close to the factory.

Suddenly he hears a sound of sobbing, A child—a little boy—is crouched against the fence, crying bitterly.

“What is the matter?” he asks.

The child tells him—he is lost.

“Come with me,” he says; “I will take you home.” He knows the boy—for more than twelve months he worked beside his father in the factory.

The child gives his hand trustingly, and they go on together. A little further on he stops to look at his watch, and the boy gets a glimpse of his face.

Instantly the child endeavours to wrest himself free, at the same time crying out, in terror, “Let me go!—let me go!”

“What is the matter?” he asks. “Come with me; I will take you home.”

“No, no!” exclaims the child, beating frantically the detaining hand, “not with you—I know you. *You are Judas!*”

Instantly he releases the boy.

“Even the children!” he groans. “Oh, God, I am heavily punished!”

He is at the door of his lodgings. Although it is very late now, there is a faint light within. He opens the door softly and enters. As he is passing up the passage, the door of the sitting-room opens and his landlady calls him.

“I have been waiting up for you, sir,” she says as a beginning. “I am very sorry to have to do anything unpleasant; you have been near two years now in my house, sir, but I must give you warning. You see, sir,” she went on, seeing that he was about to speak, “it’s the other boarders. They’ve heard about you going back to the factory, and to-night they all came to me and said that they would not live in the same house as a ‘scab,’ and that if you did not go to-night they would all leave in the morning; and so you see, sir, I could do nothing else except to ask you, although I am sorry to lose you, if ——”

“To-night!” he said, bitterly, “they are in a hurry—to-night!”

"If you please, sir, that's what they said, and if you can make it convenient to go, sir—there is that little matter of arrears, we would call that square."

"Very well," he said, turning on his heel abruptly, "I will think over it."

"To-night!" he muttered, as he lit the candle in his own room; "to-night! Ah well, as well to-night as to-morrow, or the next day."

In the morning a small crowd gathered in the street.

"Poor fellow!" said a woebegone woman who was nursing a wan and woebegone infant; "poor fellow!"

"*You* pity him!" exclaimed a man at her side; "only for him we should have won. As it is—look at me, look at yourself, look at the child, half-starved now, and likely to be whole-starved soon, thanks to *him*—and you *pity* him!"

And one by one the crowd took the question up, and discussed it; for by this time the news was generally known.

Judas, the traitor, had hanged himself.

E. F. SQUIRES.



HE LET HIS HEART GO.

THE wind whistled, and every now and then threw a splash of sleety rain against the fissured face of a bleached, grey rock.

A cavity in its centre looked to the south-west, whence wind and rain came; and although the hole extended a good way, the chill gusts occasionally reached the farthest corner. Gyp Pringle crawled back as far as possible and built up a barricade of coarse packing-paper which he had carried on his back from Sydney warehouses.

Dog-weariness made him sleep. He had tramped ~~town and suburbs~~ all day in search of work—the gate to bread and beef and, mayhap, ale. As he closed his eyes the rattle of reed and brass music was borne across the Domain from the precincts of Government House.

Soon he dreamed. What a heaven of gratifications spread before him! Beef, potatoes, ale, whisky, tobacco. He stretched out a hungry hand. Alas! he awoke.

Realising the cruel hoax, he kicked viciously. To his surprise his foot struck something soft, a composite of flesh and blood, and a plaintive whine made humble protest.

"Now, then," said Gyp, "who the devil are you? This hole's mine. No doubt you're a Socialist. Well, clear out! I did n't slope roun' town an' hump this here swag o' old paper an' root out this bloomin' marble hall for the benefit o' the community at large. I done it for meself. I'm an individualist—I am. So take yerself to gaol or glory out o' this."

Only heavy breathing answered.

"D'ye want me to bash yer? G' up to Guv'ment House, can't yer? They're singin' and coortin' up there, I believe, an' ye might

be able to collar a fan or spoon when nobody's lookin'. Clear out, I say!"

This time the whine became a subdued bark, and a cold nose was thrust into his hollow hand.

"Me bloomin' 'ead! ye're a dawg! An' I took ye all the time for a Socialist! I beg parding humbly. All the same though—out ye go. If a coal-heaver snooked into 'Ampden's, out *he* 'd go. An' as this hole's my castle, out *you* go! An' if you had a kennel an' I attempted to snook in, out *I* 'd go. See? We're all individualists."

He kicked.

"Sometimes though, notwithstanding me logic, I've thought that if those on top were a bit kinder to the folk below, it might be better all round. It's not me brain says that; it's me heart."

He kicked again.

"If, when a coal-heaver snooked into Governor 'Ampden's, 'Ampden gave 'im time to draw breath before firin' 'im out; or when I snooked into the coal-heaver's, or when this outcast dawg snooked in here——"

He drew up his foot smartly.

"Well, now," he said, sitting up, "dammut, but I'll give me heart her way for onst. Let her go, Gallagher!"

When daylight came Gyp examined his partner in adversity, and recognised that the dog belonged to a lady in whose garden he had done a couple of days' work a week or two before. This he considered an extremely gratifying discovery.

"Me bloomin' 'ead!" he exclaimed; "this means a big reward, if it does n't lead to a constant job, with a liberal pension for me old age!"

Laying hold of a piece of rope and looping it round the famished creature's neck, he continued:

"It's a pound if it's a thankee. No doubt the dawg's been lost for a time, for his hair's peelin' off. He's seen the inside o' Belmore more 'n onst, I'll go bail. An' to think I struck this patch o' luck the first time I let me heart go! This'll make a different

man o' me for the future. 'Do a kind hact' will be my motter. I venture to say most people with that motter found a dawg to start them. Come along, old boy; off to Darlin' Point to reap the reward o' virtue! Yer mistress'll be that glad to see yer face that she'll likely keep me for dinner an' fit me in a suit o' good, dry clothes."

"What have you to say?" asked the spectacled magistrate.

"That dawg came to me under a rock in the Domain, an'——"

"There's too much of this going on. You obtained work in this lady's garden with the clear intention of making friends with the dog. You were seen about the place several times since. Then you induce the dog off and keep him in your low haunts until a reward is offered. Sydney is cursed with loafers of your stamp. Three months' hard labour."

Said Gyp: "This is the first time I ever let me heart go, an' if ever ——"

But he was hauled away, crying at the top of his voice: "I'm an individualist for the rest o' me bloomin' life, I am!"

OMICRON.



THE SQUARE RING:

AN IDYLL OF LITTLE BOURKE-STREET.

WHEN Aggie had persuaded Chuck Maroney to marry her, she did up her hair. "I ain't takin' no risks," she explained; and at the critical moment she said she was twenty-one in so artless a manner that even the shabby, red-nosed parson, who had been passed by thirty-two congregations to land at Smith's Matrimonial Agency, held for a moment the sincere thought that she looked very young. At the time for fitting on the ring Chuck indignantly scorned the aluminium circlet proffered by the Agency—"Weddings, with duly qualified clergyman and ring provided, 10s. 6d."—as the advertisement ran. "Ef this here's gointer be done at all, it's gointer be done in style," he said proudly; and he ostentatiously drew from his waistcoat-pocket another ring—gold this time, and of strength and weight sufficient to restrain a horse.

Chuck was impressive in his bearing as he carefully fitted the ring on the girl's finger; and it was with the manner of one treading on air that he asked the clergyman across the road after the ceremony, "ter join me and the missus in a long'un."

On the tram, going home, the bride proudly kept her fat brown fist clenched on her knee with the heavy gold band uppermost—shining out and proclaiming to all the world that she had fulfilled her destiny.

Chuck did n't trouble to go to Ginger Macauley's for a barrow of fruit that day. "We done our honeymoon six months ago," said Aggie when he suggested the formality; but he maintained that something of the sort was necessary for the sake of appearances. So Mr. and Mrs. Maroney compromised on an afternoon's trip to

Beaumaris—"the round trip 2s. 6d." (as extensively advertised by the Victorian Railway Department) being seized upon as the most economical form of honeymoon extant.

The sands of Sandringham, the long, meandering avenue of dark green ti-trees enclosing the tram-line, the brown cliffs of Beaumaris themselves—looking like a bit of Sydney Harbour lifted up and set down in the midst of the wastes of Port Phillip bay—all seemed invested with beauty more intense than ever; and away between the brown and green tints of the land the sea lay beneath the sun smooth and pale-blue, with a bloom on it like a ripening plum. It was at Beaumaris that they had their wedding breakfast; and it was in the soft, mossy groves along the cliffs that they told their love over again and forgot that such a place as Little Bourke-street ever existed, or that the curse of working for a living had ever fallen on mankind.

Below on the sand they took off their boots and stockings and paddled like children, and with the combined influences of love and happiness and sea-air became so hysterically intoxicated that Aggie "chucked-off" in a particularly nasty way at the porter at Cheltenham, and a stand-up fight between him and Chuck was narrowly averted in consequence.

At the city, it was oysters and stout at Billy the Greek's, a fruit-supper next door, and a bottle of wine at Francesco's; and it was close on midnight when Chuck and Aggie turned from Little Bourke-street into Hogan's-place—the one spot in all Melbourne that resembles the "courts" so common in the big English towns. There was a crowd in front of Levy's door, and there were loud voices there, rising from the circle of black, flat figures that dodged around the lights in Levy's cart.

"Pull out, pull out!" whispered Aggie; "it's on'y the ole push. Slip in without 'em seein' yer."

But the old push—always eager to impress on everybody that it "knew somethin'"—stood to its self-given reputation in this instance; and the attempt of the newly-married couple to avoid the meeting was seen.

"Wher' to, Chuck?" asked Arty Doolan; "there's a beer waiting for yer here, an' we was just goin' ter drink the health av you and the missus."

The man paused, irresolute; but at that moment there peeped from behind the cart the sleek black head and piercing eyes of "the Zulu"—one of the girls at the Black Angel, and one whose company Chuck Maroney used much to affect before he met Aggie.

Aggie saw the dark, handsome face, and pressed her husband's elbow. "Come along," she whispered. But the whisper reached the Zulu, and she stepped out. "Come along," she laughed; "we're an hones' woman now, ain't we? Our old pals ain't clars enough for us. You poor silly little fool, you had to *make* Chuck Maroney marry you. He tried to make *me* marry him. Me!—me marry Chuck Maroney!" and in the dead silence of the square her pitiless laugh rang up hard from the stone pitchers. "Poor silly little fool! you an' yer fine husban'! Why, he was mine afore ever he was yours; an', marriage an' all, he's mine to-morrow if I say the word."

A bottle flashed up, and the blood fled from Aggie's face, leaving it white and horrifying. "Knock off!" she yelled; "or I'll shot this in yer mouth."

Chuck seized the weapon from his wife, and as the Zulu saw his hand close upon it she leaped forward, and her white fist swept grazingly across Aggie's face. Though ill-aimed, the blow was heavy, and Aggie staggered back to recover herself against the wall. There her face fell within the focus of Levy's lamp, and the change was plain. The jolly, reckless look she usually wore, the grey rage that the words of the Zulu had called up, had both disappeared. Instead was a calm, determined expression, almost masculine, and as she stepped out again, with the right arm square across her waist and her left elbow flapping at her side, the Zulu quailed. Aggie was no longer the easy-going little larrikinness of week-days; no longer the infuriated, insulted wife. She was a fighter pure and simple.

Unversed in the art of conflict, the barmaid ran wildly forward with her head down, spitting in her temper, and lashing out blindly

with both hands. Aggie knew her opportunity. She stepped aside, swung the whole weight of her body into her left hand, and the Zulu rolled over on the stones. From chin to cheek ran a deep red line that grew deeper as they watched ; and Aggie, laughing in her triumph, glanced from the face of her adversary to her left hand. Then raising it high above her head, she threw it suddenly downwards, and as the few red drops fell to the pitchers, she nestled to her husband's side, and, holding up her hand, smeared with blood across the four knuckles, said softly, "It was the ring that done it, Chuck ; aincher glad yer married me *now* ? "

Mc G.

DOLLY.

WHEN an English King knighted the Sir Loin of British Beef he was probably ignorant of the august precedent of a Roman ruler, who intended to raise a British oyster to consular rank, but, on reflection, decided that the honour was an inadequate one. To enjoy a plate of oysters is a proof of culture ; to enjoy a barrel, a proof of complete culture. But of late there had been rumours of chemically-concocted imitations of the delightful bivalve. With the advent of the manufactured article, an awful thing of slimy loathsomeness, surely good taste would pass away, and there be left no desire to train the palate for the mermaid embrace of this delicate softness in armour. So I mused as, one by one, the Sydney Rocks were shrined in an appreciative grave.

“Good Lord ! Dolly ! ”

The words shaped themselves in my throat, clattered up against the roof of my mouth, and almost found utterance. But the sight of what came after drove them back to the limbo of things unspoken. It was certainly Dolly ; Dolly looking even more rounded and voluptuous than she had looked an odd dozen or so months before. But he that followed was as surely her husband, a husband still under the glamour of a honeymoon preserved by passion or art beyond its decent and proper limit of thirty days. And—Great Heavens ! would the procession never end ?—there came filing into the shop a third, a handmaiden of Venus Genetrix, bearing in her arms the baby of Dolly, and the evident pride of Dolly’s husband. Confounded, I watched the entrance of the nurse-girl, half expecting, half fearing the doorway to be darkened by yet another.

“Will the line stretch out to the crack of doom ? ”

A dreadful vision of a matronly Dolly, followed by scores of maids, each burdened by an infant that wagged a tiny finger of

reproach, oppressed me for a moment. Then I saw that the procession had ended. There was but one baby and one husband. Still, the idea of Dolly with a husband and a baby . . . and only eighteen months since. . . . It was surprising, even alarming.

The husband seemed swelling with fatuous pride, resembling fantastically the Sydney Rock on my plate, which puffingly pushed out its ample cream-coloured waist from a flat shell, as though the kindness of the Oyster Fates were favouring its destiny. He was fair and beefy; and the proprietary air with which he viewed his wife and his baby was as obvious as his necktie. That, a royal purple shot with brilliant green, wailed fearfully or shrieked exultantly as it caught the light obliquely or directly. Dolly came to me with outstretched hand and a smile which showed two rows of white, even teeth, specked in three places with gold. (The history of those specks I could have told with absolute devotion to detail. I cannot recall whether I still possess the invoice.) There was not a suggestion of diffidence in her face. Her eyes did not plead: they boldly commanded.

"This, Dick" (Of course, his name was Dick. Men who look like that always are "Dick"!)" "is Mr. Brice, an old friend of mine. Mr. Brice—my husband, Mr. Moxman."

I felt confused, ashamed, afraid to take the hand of the honest fellow in front of me. But Dolly was imperturbable. I had to accept the proffered hand and submit mine to its warm grasp; to refuse would have seemed strange, even suspicious to Mr. Moxman. Though, on reflection, I could no more think of suspicion as possible in his mind than I could imagine a pearl under the vest of the fine oyster, the last of its dozen, which still pushed out its stomach as a suggestion to mine,—losing, I thought, a little of the first sleek look of content as I continued to delay the devouring of it.

They stayed half-an-hour or so. Moxman told me, admiringly, how his wife doted on oysters—"not a common taste in women." It seemed to him distinctly genteel. I was tempted to tell him in return how the oyster is the touchstone of character, by which the shop-girl and the theatre-girl are judged; a taste for the bivalve

is significant of much. But why should I play the Serpent in a Fool's Paradise? The baby, of course, had to be admired, and its striking resemblance to Dadda noted. When the maid brought the little germ of a sinner up for admiration, Moxman suggested that perhaps "the girl" would like some prawns. Mrs. Moxman frowned the idea down.

At last they went, he gloating over his wife with greedy eyes, the nurse-maid following with the defiant humility of an Australian servant.

Now, at Deluigi's you get the finest oysters in all the city of Sydney; the only Tasmanian trumpeter that can make an Englishman forget the turbot; and schnapper of sentimental plumpness. But I was forced to resolve upon an abandonment of this home of salt delights. I could not risk meeting Dolly again. To sacrifice Deluigi's was to lose something of life. Yet, after all, one must sooner or later pay for one's pleasures. After eighteen months the price of that rosy fortnight at Lake Macquarie had to be paid.

Saddened by the thought of this sacrifice on the altar of a dead ecstasy, I thought bitterly of Dolly, her husband, and the baby, going home. I could see her as she swam proudly by his side, and hear her as she asked him if he had noticed how confused and red I had been. "Poor Mr. Brice! He was an old admirer of mine. For twelve months he teased me something dreadful to marry him. He is not a bad-looking fellow,—though, of course, nothing like you, Dick." (This with an admiring look aloft). "He has, too, no end of money; but, you know, Dick" (with a squeeze of the arm which she held) "I always had an ideal, and until I met you ——"

When they reached home, I could imagine the hot and flustered nursemaid asking to be allowed to go out that night, and being refused by the indignant little matron, who tells her how wrong it is for young women to go out unaccompanied, and hints darkly as to what may happen to girls guilty of such wrong.

A woman is never ashamed, but when necessary she can appear to be.

CAUGHT ON THE BEACH.

³⁰
IN the spring of '81, I was in Greymouth, ~~M.L.~~ For a young man just freed from the heat of ~~North Queensland~~ there was plenty to see and to do. The town is inconsiderable, but there is a noble river for bathing and boating. The bush-clad hills and narrow limestone caves are delightful ; while to walk out along the mile-long breakwater, and watch the giant breakers rush surging in, gives an experience not easily to be paralleled elsewhere.

One day old Tainui, the Maori "odd man" at my hotel, started out for Point Elizabeth, a rocky headland some six miles up the north coast, to try a new lobster-pot he had made out of green supplejacks. We crossed to Cobden, an obsolete township on the north side of the Grey River, and here I foolishly gave old Tainui half-a-crown to get some rum. He got the rum and carried it, walking just behind me ; and, after half-an-hour or so, he calmly lay down by the roadside, handing over to me with Maori gravity the empty rum bottle and the lobster-pot and bait.

Mentally cursing the old fellow, I pushed on. I had never been to Point Elizabeth, but it had been indicated to me from the steamer's deck, so I knew I was right when, after a couple of hours' tramp, I arrived at a rocky island surmounted at one end by a natural tower of rocks crowned with some tough bushes. The tide was just low enough for me to reach the fishing pools on the island, and in a few minutes I had baited my trap, moored it securely in a nice deep pool, and was quietly sitting down eating the lunch I had brought.

I had no lack of luck. Lobsters, or rather crayfish, were plentiful ; and my first haul was three beauties. I had forgotten to take the bag from old Tainui ; but I tipped them into a securely

isolated pool in the table of rock from which I was fishing. Soon I had a couple of dozen crayfish in my extemporised aquarium, fighting and tumbling over each other; and, growing tired of such easy sport, I started to explore the rest of the little island.

Just then I discovered a curious thing. The pool I had my crayfish in was at the foot of a little wall of smooth rock some twelve feet high. Extending to within an inch of this wall, and in such a position as to half cover the pool I was using, was a huge flat piece of detached rock which, as I clambered upon it, I found to be just on the balance. It was, in fact, a "rocking stone."

Here was a discovery. The mass was some ten or fifteen feet across; and, by shifting my weight some two or three feet on each side of the centre, I found I could rock the stone to and fro in a novel kind of see-saw. The rocking-stone sloped sharply down where it approached the little wall; and, going over to examine that side of it, my foot slipped from under me and I came bang against the wall. The impact momentarily released the rocking-stone; my right foot slipped in between the stone and the wall; and, as I took the weight of my body on my left, down came the stone again and I was a prisoner!

I could not take my weight off the rocking-stone, for there was no crevice in the smooth wall above me to which I could cling. I could not spring up to relieve the stone of my weight, for my right foot was jammed, and my left, being between it and the wall, was rendered useless—even if the stone, instead of sloping sharply down, had been flat enough to get a footing for a jump.

The pain, too, was intolerable. The space between the cliff and the stone was less than two inches, and I had the prospect of being slowly drowned as the tide rose.

Execrating my luck, I considered possible means of escape. I had my knife, and if I could cut away my boot I thought surely I could wrench my foot free. I got out the knife, and, after a lot of trouble, cut away my boot and sock. Then I got as good a purchase as I could with my free foot, and tugged and wrenched

and tried to spring. No use ; the harder I pressed with my free foot the greater the pressure on the rocking-stone and the tighter the jamb.

So I waited and waited. My foot was, of course, torn and bleeding, but so tightly compressed as to be almost without pain. By-and-by the tide began to come in, and I found myself stupidly wondering how long it would be before it reached my mouth ; and whether Tainui would recover his senses and liberate me—or my remains. I pictured to myself my skeleton, and wondered whether my head would fall off first, or if I would float off from where I was jammed.

Then I fell into a kind of dozing stupor, and some hours must have passed, for presently I woke to find the spray dashing over my face. Then I discovered that feeling had come back to my foot. Slowly I grew conscious of a cutting, pinching sensation, and, looking through the crevices, I saw—the crayfish were grappling and beginning to eat my toes !

The agony of that time ! I yelled idiotically at the brutes, forgetting they could not hear. I tried to stamp with my free foot, and then, the horror of the thing overcoming me, I cursed and yelled like a maniac.

Suddenly, during a lull in the booming of the surf, the echo of my despairing coo-ee came back to me from the foothills. Fool that I was not to have called out before, I thought ; there might be someone within range. I had lungs like leather, and, quickened by hope and maddened by the attacks of the lobsters, I sent out a succession of coo-ees that fairly lacerated the atmosphere.

Just as I was on the point of desisting, a figure appeared on the beach. I thought of Tainui, but no ! the figure was a woman's, and my heart sank as I reflected that she would be powerless to help. By this time the spray from the breakers was flying over my head incessantly. No sooner, however, had the woman made out for certain that there was someone on the rock than she set about

rescue. Quickly she discarded her short and scanty costume and entered the surf. Cleverly she breasted the rollers, taking full advantage of the undertow and diving through the worst of the breakers, until she gained the rock and came stepping along its slippery surface.

As she neared me, I wondered. She was nearly full-grown, her body and limbs displaying the perfection of athletic womanly grace. She could not be a Maori—or a half-caste, even—she was too light. And she surely was not a European, for she betrayed no token of shame at standing thus nude before a man.

Quickly she learned my plight, and like a Trojan set herself to free me. She ran to the opposite end of the stone, and, though the breakers were now beating on it, tried to bear it down so that my end would tilt up and release me. Her weight was not enough, but as active mentally as she was physically, she sang out, "Hang out as well as you can while I go for a sapling."

Though every second seemed like a minute to me, the novelty of this turn in the adventure took my mind off the pain sufficiently to let me admire the girl's strength and agility. Lord, how she swam! Sometimes I would see her on the curl of a breaker, side-arming ahead like a steam-engine. Then, as the wave broke, I would catch sight of her head as she shook her long hair back and gamely breasted the undertow. Soon she gained the shore and, wet and bare as she was, ran along the beach out of my sight. When she reappeared she had in her hand a tomahawk, and made across the shingle bank into the scrub that bounds the beach. She soon returned with a long, stout sapling.

How she lugged this heavy green stick through the surf over to the island where I was; how she inserted the end in the crevice alongside my foot and prized away that dreadful rock, must be imagined, for I cannot describe it. What I know is that she got me ashore just after dark, and, my foot being fearfully injured (the crayfish took part of two of my toes—old Dr. Morrice took the rest), she extemporised a pair of crutches and took me home to her father's hut.

Here, in exchange for my own, I learned his history, which included, of course, that of his half-wild girl. His name was Tregarthen—a Cornishman ; had been a miner ; was a beachcomber on the seventeen-mile beach. She had grown up what Mrs. Grundy would call a regular heathen ; till in her seventeenth year, though she could neither read, write, sew, nor dress herself decently, and knew no more of religion or civilisation than a troglodyte, she could shoot, fell a tree, “wash” the black-sand, dig in the garden, and swim like an otter.

I stayed at the house until the packer brought out a horse to carry me into town and to the hospital. And now . . . now my plain-spoken friends tell me that it was all a scheme, that I went fishing for lobsters and caught something that holds a good deal tighter even than a lobster—a wife. However, as the same friends rave about the beauty of my wife’s face and figure, I am satisfied, because I, who first saw her shining like a water-goddess on the rocks at Point Elizabeth, know that their praise is true.

BROGDEN.



YARRAWONGA: ON THE MURRAY.

WHAT more pleasant than this river-solitude among the whispering red-gums, to swim or loiter or dream in, this serene Sunday morning. 'Tis the only church I love, and I am a devout listener. My bright-eyed little friend, the woodpecker, shall preach me a sermon, and a magpie shall sing me his doxology, and the infinite deep of blue sky shall be my Amen.

Here let me lie, then, with the roots of this big tree for my pillow, and marvel awhile at the delicate filigrane of bronze and chrysolite leaves above me, laid upon the azure air like rare tracery upon some antique vase. The air is wine-like and warm; and the endless beauty of life, and the mystery of its myriad forms, fill me with their wonder. O leaves, and wings, and antennæ, and stones, bring me closer to your great, open secret of Joy and Life!

Multitudes of ants visit me; the big, black, warlike reconnoiters, and their red-nosed brethren out of yon tree, climb over me; little emmets go a-foraging in the folds of my garments, and lady-birds come and walk over my hands and my book and fly away again into the great unknown of poetry and blue air and forest whence they came. Moreover, a small carnation-coloured spider of large ideas has undertaken to weave my head fast to a neighbouring sapling, and evidently considers me his by right of treasure-trove. A thousand innocent insects take an interest in me, till I begin to think I am fallen, like Gulliver, upon a new Land of Lilliput. And, truth to tell, this borderland of the Australian bush is fairyland enough, with its weird beauty and peace, its forest music and silences, and wonderful colours, and multitudes of busy little creatures in earth and air and waters.

Here, are we not far enough from cities to forget their din and

smoke? A little town, however, stands not far away in the wheat-fields of the plain, to remind us of the presence of man, but not near enough to destroy our day-dreams; you can see the pale blue roofs of galvanised iron nestling into yonder fringe of red-gums in the soft haze, a mile or so southward. How homely and beautiful in the illusion of distance! Who could dream of how many vulgar taverns and ribald gossips and police-court cases that peaceful-looking little hamlet can bring forth? Nor shall I reveal aught. To-day, one would fain look at that life from its rosier side. Perchance this afternoon, or in the twilight, a few figures will be seen in pairs emerging from the haze-veiled borders; black-clothed swains, and their sweethearts in light summery muslins decked with pink Sunday bows; and they will go loitering and cosseting and kissing in the shadows by the river, these rustic lovers, and think they are the first who have ever been so wicked and happy in the world. And long may the simpletons abide in their belief!

And the great river flows by, winding among the gum-swamps and the high marigold and ochre banks of clay, on its way to the sea. All things around it, forest and plains and sky, are rapt away in that great idyllic dream of Nature that they knew along with the emu and the flute-bird, ages ago, before the white man had come to them across the Big Water.

Through these dreamy woods great flocks of cherubim-like cockatoos fly in radiant circles among the luminous finery of the gum-tree tops, shining snow-white and yellow against the sky. Their sentinels have caught sight of me, and have shrilled the warning that a stranger is within view, and now the others fill the air with shrieks of protestation, anger, and alarm. Hitherto they had been silently tearing the bark off the dead timber, searching for the soft pink grubs, as silently as they had stripped farmer Jackson's corn for him last harvest. Now the trees are echoing like mountain caves with their raucous voices, and the forest becomes resonant as a bell. The magpies, too, take up the alarm, and a bevy of parsonic-looking crows, who have been pecking the body of a dead sheep, join in the chorus.

In the distant lagoons, a troop of snow-white cranes look up in affright from their microscopic toil among the white water-lilies, and gather and stand, like a row of surpliced choristers, on an old log, and finally go flurrying away in alarm over the russet-flowered sedge to hunt for frogs and fish in more secluded haunts. Gradually the cockatoos cease their screaming, and the gum-swamp resumes its eternal quiet—broken only by the antique sounds which make the forest silence so strange and wonderful. *Tap!—Tap!* You hear the bill of the spotted woodpecker, and little chips and flecks of bark fall rustling down the trunk; in the depths of echoing trees far away some bird is calling, calling; and from yonder branches comes the sweet, roguish fluting of a magpie; and anon the twitterings of parrakeets and the wailing notes of the summer-birds are heard.

Afar off in the swamp you hear the tinkling of a bell, which betrays the presence of Bill Rafferty's bullock "Strawberry"—affectionately addressed by his owner in forms of rhetoric unknown to Quintilian. Strawberry is at present out with the rest of the team for a fortnight's holiday in the gum-swamp, and as he pokes his nose among the flags and rushes each movement is accompanied by the wonderful fairy music of his bell. Unseen in the midst of the thickets, one might imagine that the tired and stolid old waggon-bullock, which has been sworn at and flogged these last ten years over all the roads of Riverina, and plagued by labour, dust, flies, and heat till his spirit is broken and fled for ever—one might imagine, I say, that this broken-down old beast were some wood-faun pursued with forest music; some forest Ariel, with his invisible minstrelsy; or might it not be that celebrated lady of nursery enchantment who has

Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
And sweetest of music wherever she goes.

Did you not see that sapphire-and-crimson sprite that flitted by on the river like a flash? It was the little kingfisher, first cousin to the Momus of the woods, the laughing-jackass. Here in the clay-bank is the kingfisher's little nest, and there is the branch over the

stream where he sits in the shadow and sees the bright waters pass beneath him in the mid-day.

And if you go round that next curve of the river some evening in the twilight, very silently, the brown crane that sits in the red-gum over the water may invite you to share his choice supper of river mussels, served up upon yon mud bank, and you may eat them out of their own dainty shells of mother-of-pearl, enamelled and polished in Nature's most marvellous workshop, where the colours were learnt from the clouds and waters at day dawn. With royal prodigality, my lord the Brown Crane leaves these jewelled and opaline dishes uncared-for after once using them, and they shall glitter and shine in every morning sun till next Winter come with his floods to bury them in the muddy river-deeps again. But the Brown Crane cares not, and haunts the river shallows still with majestic ease and dignity.

And, as if by contrast to his sedateness, Nature has created a certain little blue-black fantail, a sweet-voiced, dainty little fairy which sings in the woods and around the settlers' huts till long after sundown. Its movements are all bows and flirtings and pirouettes. Its whole life is one courtly minuet; it cannot be sedate or thoughtful a moment, but poses and flirts and is for ever sprightly, timid, and gay like some roguish maid, or some elf out of the "Midsummer Night's Dream." I have a hundred times desired to ask it for news of Cobweb and Mustard Seed, or of the Queen Titania, but have been called back from such fantasy by a rude, hilarious shout overhead among the gum-trees.

It is the laughing-jackass—the goburra. A rare realist, is Jack, and plays havoc with the moods poetical and sentimental. A worse Philistine than Aretino! Hard to believe that he and his mates are not laughing at *me*. The deuce! can they know of that old love-letter I kissed the other night as I was putting on my nightcap? Or of those belated sapphics I tried to cobble to the moon—or of my despair at finding no rhyme for Boomanoomanah? Or do they know of more serious things? Egad, I distrust these birds! Early of a morning, before the faint white of dawn appears

in the sky over the eastern swamps, the river-banks resound with their mad laughter. "Some people calls 'im the 'larfin'-jackass,' but I calls him the mornin'-watch," says my friend, Pete the fisherman, who has been a soldier in his time. "A reg'lar regimental bugler he is, and it's my belief as that there cuss of a bird takes a mortal delight in rousin' the whole lot of other birds out of their sleep,—just like my old woman, for the matter of that, out of sheer devilry." So the magpie is called to his glees and matins, and the kingfisher pokes his head forth from his mud-hole in the bank of the stream and considers whether it is yet time to go bee-hunting in the peppermints or fish-spearing in the lagoons. The water-rats are startled like criminals, in their prowling round the fisherman's lobster traps. And by-and-by the sleepy wood-dove is awakened and flies into the great new world of the new day.

And now the goburras are silent again.

Oh, the wide, sacred silence—the ethereal morning of this Australian fairyland of bush! This Riverina air is as the clear, joyous atmosphere of Attica, when marbles and poetry were its religion.

And the long, luxurious tresses of the red-gums sway gently and cast their play of violet shadows upon the rosy grey boles, and the infinite heaven of blue embraces the earth in its soft arms, and all is well!

F. S. DELMER.



HIS HAIR.

THE little albino barber was quite a show feature of that small Maoriland township. He was about thirty-nine, unmarried, and without a solitary love-experience, when one morning a girl stepped into his saloon.

"Can you trim my hair, barber?" she asked.

"Not this mornin', miss. I'd 'ave t' shut th' room ter gents to do it; but if you'll come ut two-thirty I'll be 'appy t' oblige yer."

He had all ready when she returned. Enveloping her in a pink wrapper, he let loose the coils of jet black hair, which, as he lightly shook their strands apart, fell about his feet in a profusion of glossy ripples. With a smothered exclamation he stood back for a moment, his pink expressionless eyes growing redder-rimmed, his placid features working with delight in the spectacle before him—so unique, so utterly unexpected.

"I want you to cut a good deal of it off," she said; "it is so heavy." And she sighed wearily.

The usually communicative barber did not reply. He brushed and combed the wonderful hair, fingering it as though it were of spun glass; then began to clip.

"You are to take off quite six inches," she ordered.

Snick! snick!—the frizzy black fragments piled into quite a little heap at the albino's feet, but still those raven tresses swept the floor.

"Thank you," she said, when he had lifted and re-coiled that ebon crown; "I shall work with less sense of oppression now that you have lightened my load,"—and, smiling, she paid her shilling and went out.

Twice during that summer she came again to have her hair cut

At the beginning of the cold weather she came for the fourth time.

"It's 'ardly necessary t' cut any more off," the albino objected, caressing the falling hair, which now hung some inches from the floor.

"Oh, yes! I simply cannot bear the weight; take off a good length; it's too much, such a mass of hair!" And she settled herself in the big chair, her small face reflected in the mirror.

The albino saw not the face; his thoughts were all of that glorious hair—his heart's first love.

Small and few were the locks he severed; but for over an hour he brushed and smoothed, till the blue-black polish reflected the movement of his broad, flat-nailed fingers, while the girl, dozing, noted not how time passed. Customers were clamouring for entrance when, with a heavy sigh of regret, he drew away the wrapper.

"I'm afraid I've kept you a long time, but you've taken away my headache," she said, gratefully.

"'Eadache! Do you 'ave 'em?"

"Almost all the time. I'll come again soon to have it charmed away."

"I 'ope yer will. I'm always free early afternoons. Yes, I 'ope yer will," repeated the albino; not looking at her, but speaking to the hair.

She passed out into the street, and met her headache at the first step on the rude pavement.

The albino, on his knees, carefully gathered every hair from the sheet he had spread to receive them as they fell; and placed the gleanings in a little screw of silver paper upon a shelf, among several similar parcels.

After a month the weather set in cold, bringing sleet and snow. It was at half-past ten that the albino, having warmed his small, limp frame with a pint of beer, turned out his gas and went to bed. He had scarcely got to sleep when a loud banging at his street-door woke him with a start.

As the banging continued he got out of bed, grumbling, and partially opened the door, enquiring, "'Oo's there?"

"Are you the barber?"

"'Oo else d' y' s'pose?"

"Then you are to come with me sharp, and bring along the best case o' razors you've got."

"'Oo's wantin' me?"

"Oh, shut up, an' look alive! D'ye think I'm goin' to stand 'ere all night answerin' questions?" snarled the man, shivering.

"You're none too bloomin' perlite yerself," snapped the albino, slamming the door in the face of the man, who retreated to the waiting buggy, cursing the weather.

Presently the albino emerged, well wrapped up.

"Ready?" asked the man.

"Ready."

"Not forgettin' the razors?"

"Not fergettin' th' razors." And neither spoke again until, after a long drive into the pitch-black, sodden country, they drew up at a cottage.

The door was opened by a tall man.

"Come in, my man," he said; and the albino entered, blinking at the light.

It was a small room without a fireplace. Two silent, serious-faced men sat watching him.

"Remove your wet things," said the tall man; and when the albino had complied, he continued, "Now, barber, are your razors sharp?"

"Yes 'ir, sharp as razors," said the albino, his teeth chattering with cold.

"This is no time for jests," reproved the tall man; "I want you to shave a patient as soon as you are warm enough to keep a steady hand—a very steady hand, mind."

The albino, with a low, whistling sigh, drew forth his case and examined its contents.

"Whenever you are ready," hinted the tall man; and the three

preceded the albino into a larger room adjoining. The lamp was shaded, but a bright fire shed a flickering glow over a bed upon which, moaning at intervals, but tossing, tossing ever, with incessant rolling of her pain-racked, fevered head, lay the girl who had come to him in the summer, the possessor of—his hair.

"This is the patient. You can begin at once!" said the tall man, as the albino made no sign.

"I could n't do it, sir! Wot a sacrifice!" And all the blood in the albino's lukewarm body flew to his face and set his stiff limbs tingling.

"It must be done," said the tall man, sternly.

The albino lifted a wisp of her hair, no longer glossy and soft; tangled, tarnished, harsh to the touch of his slow-moving fingers.

They attempted to hold her still, but no efforts could quiet her. Anguished at the sight of that black, dishevelled mass the albino said:

"If I'd a brush I think I'd calm 'er down."

They handed him one, which he drew slowly and regularly from her forehead to the furthest point of hair he could reach. At the end of an hour she lay still.

He clipped every lock, laying each to each as he relinquished them, until you could have supposed them severed at one cut.

The shaving was more difficult: the light was poor.

But after two hours there remained a bald head with a little fringe of black round the face, where a narrow line of hair still grew.

The albino gathered his tools, whispering, "I 'spose I'd better take this 'ere"—indicating the hair—"an' make it up: 'er mother might like it?"

"Yes, yes, just as you please," said the tall man.

"Pore young thing," went on the albino, winding the hair into a neat coil.

"It's very sad," replied the tall man; "pupil teacher, teaching all day, studying all night, too much for mortal woman: the

result——” Looking towards the bed, as if struck by some thing he saw there, he stepped swiftly to the girl’s side.

“Barber, you have left a fringe of hair!”

“Yes ’ir, I thought they ’d like it, in—in case of anythin’ ’appenin’—she ’d not look so—so ’orrid like.”

“I understand.” And the tall man bowed his head.

Two days later something did happen.

The albino wove the hair into a beautiful plait, secured at each end by a buckle cleverly made from its own strands.

But her mother never got it.

When he came to the end at last, after six weeks of loving toil, and was about to send it away, something snapped at his heart.

He tried to weep: not a tear. Then he rose and cast an enquiring eye upon the beams which braced his roof.

The middle one would do.

He got his step-ladder and placed it beneath the beam, then mounting, found the precious coil just long enough. As he finished his preparations, a verse he had once seen quoted in a weekly paper came into his head:

When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fettered to her eye,
The gods that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

It had appealed to him as a barber, and now he understood it as a man. He repeated it softly as he stood.

“Know no such liberty,” he concluded, smiling to himself. Then he kicked away the ladder.

He looked very happy, they said when they found him—“for a hanged man.”

MABEL HOLMES.

STRAWBERRY: A LOVE STORY.

JOCK CONDON was over forty as years count. He was grey in patches, and wrinkled and fat. His hands were swollen from hanging listlessly, and bad weather had distorted his face. By proper reckoning he was getting old, but, measured by the standard of experience, he was only a youth. And all because he was slow ; other men had lived through their lives, had tasted of the world, the flesh and the devil, had married and given in marriage, and had even made their final bow while Jock was travelling to that point in existence whereat monumental marble ceases to be uninteresting.

But, having reached that point, Jock began as a matter of course to court the young girls of the district, instead of the mothers who had borne or the maiden aunts who had nursed them ; and he met with ridicule. Even his experience with Maggie Johnston only acted as a temporary check. He went on grinning upon one after another in his amorous fashion, putting the inevitable question when chance offered, till there was not in the whole neighbourhood a single young woman unasked. Then Jock became miserable. He sat before the fire in his lonely hut and thought, and thought ; and it seemed to him that life was blacker than the darkness that covered the earth. No mate was his, and years were going by. Fielding was dead, whom he remembered since they were boys together. Morton was dead ; and Joyce. He, too, would be called upon some day, the dream within his heart unrealised.

Suddenly his face brightened. He stirred the fire nervously and rubbed his hands. "Take the sheep round that way to-morrow," he muttered. And so the die was cast.

She was not an angel, this newest of Jock's chosen. Even he

guessed that. Her history no man knew ; and as for her name—they called her “Strawberry.” She came a stranger to that place, but whence or how no tongue ever told. This only the Dogwood people knew : she had possessed herself of a hut and strip of land in their midst ; she wrought, and tilled, and delved as men do, and she lived somehow.

Now, Jock was vaguely conscious that Strawberry would not make an ideal wife, but he was desperate. So he bore up along the bank of the creek next day, stooping to keep under cover, and made his attack. Strawberry was hoeing a row of potatoes near the fence. Jock could see the back of her head rising and falling with every stroke, and his heart thumped. He had often seen her thus, and he wished now that he had introduced himself before—it would have made the task so much easier. However, he crept up to the fence, and on hands and knees spent some time looking through a hole. Presently he stood up and whistled, but bobbed down again immediately, with his heart thumping louder than ever. Strawberry worked on. A pebble was lying at his hand. He picked it up and threw it over gently, so that it would not hurt. But the pebble fell short in the soft ground, and the hoe came down with its rhythmic beat.

Jock got another stone, and, standing up, put his best effort into the aim. This time it hit Strawberry on the ankle just where there was a big hole in her stocking, and she wheeled round in time to see a grinning face disappear behind the logs.

That was enough for Strawberry. Hoe in hand, she rushed to answer the challenge. But Jock made off backwards, grinning and showing all possible signs of peace. He wanted the lady to understand that this was merely his playful way of introducing himself, but he stammered badly, and she was forcing matters.

“You dashed gorilla !” she called out, climbing the fence ; “I’ll teach you !”

But just then Jock fell flat into the creek with a splash that startled the birds a hundred yards off. He struggled out on the

other side dripping, with hat in hand, only to find his lady-love still brandishing the hoe.

“Will yer marry me?” he called out across the water.

The hoe was gradually lowered.

“Eh! what’s that?”

Jock put the question again, adding, “That’s what I came for.”

“Well, why did n’t you say so, you grinning idiot?”

Jock looked pleased at the compliment.

“Who the devil are you, anyway?” she went on.

He told her.

“Well, come over here!”

He waded through and stood meekly on the bank. Then they sat on the fence for awhile, and later on Jock helped to carry her things to his hut.

There was not much romance about it as the world judges, but poor old Jock was satisfied at the time. And even afterwards, when Strawberry took command and upset all his household arrangements,—when she was spending his money freely on visits to the township, and bullying him of nights,—he was very patient. Throughout long days, while following the sheep, he discussed the matter with his dogs; but Rover showed plainly that he had no opinion whatever concerning marriage, and Laddie only wagged his tail.

At length, Jock came to regard his experience as natural, and this bred in him a kind of helpless pity for all married men. He began secretly to long for his lost solitude, and his face grew sullen. Then, one night, after yarding the sheep, he found a visitor at home. A big, heavy-browed man it was, dark-looking as a Spaniard. He nodded carelessly as Jock entered, and took no further notice, while Jock sidled into a corner to sulk. All the evening, the stranger talked familiarly with Strawberry. They laughed and joked coarsely, and about ten o’clock the stranger turned abruptly to Jock: “About time you sloped, is n’t it?” he said.

Jock stared like an owl.

"About time you got!" repeated the stranger.

"Where to?" Jock asked, stupidly.

"To blazes—I don't care. Ain't room for three here, anyway."

Jock had come to that conclusion also, yet he was inclined to protest.

"But——" he commenced.

"No 'buts,'" the visitor interrupted, standing before the fire; "there's a hut down by the creek. Come on, now—get! This here's my missus."

Jock turned pale, and his eyes rolled.

"Her?" he asked, jerking his thumb.

Strawberry went towards him and said, more softly than he had ever heard her speak before, "You'd better go. Take a blanket and some tucker with you."

She made a bundle silently and opened the door, and when it closed again the shepherd realised that this had been his home for over thirty years.

The man within laughed harshly. "Strange old bloke, that!" he remarked.

The woman did not answer for a while, then she said, "He's not a bad sort, Bob."

Next day Jock met the ration-cart near the main road. "You need n't go down to—to the hut to-day. I'll carry the stuff," he said to the driver.

The bag was handed out. "How's the missus, Jock?" the young fellow asked with a grin.

"She—oh, she—the bag is n't heavy," Jock answered, as he hurried away.

So Jock lived in the hut that used to be Strawberry's, and cooked his own meals again, and muttered, and stirred the fire just as in years gone by. And when about a month had gone a swagman passed towards the setting sun, and Jock knew that Strawberry, too, was alone.

Then began a struggle. Should he go back to her? Should he claim his own hut? The dogs did not know; and while he was still pondering, and wearing himself to a skeleton, came a day when the sheep were not liberated. Another followed, and by noon Strawberry took his place. She let the hungry animals out and sought the shepherd by the creek. He was sick—was very sick. And she set to work to nurse him back to health. All day she watched his sheep, at night she yarded them, and came to sit beside the bed; and, while he lay thus unconscious in summer heat, a fire broke out. At sundown it seemed far away, but the north wind rose and urged it on, and by midnight the sky was red for miles, and the woman could hear the crackling grass and leaves. She thought of the penned-up sheep, and, single-handed, burned a strip around the yard. Then, with set face, she hurried back to the hut and stood on guard. And later, when the Dogwood people came, they saw against the broad front of the fire the solitary figure of a woman fighting as never woman fought before. So she worked and watched till Jock got well again, and together they went back to his hut. There she made a garden and planted fruit-trees; she helped him with the flock; she saved money. They even enlarged the hut in the course of years; and when sickness came again it was Jock who bore the burden of the toil and the watching; and he it was who was left to mourn.

He came home one day and found their visitor of years before waiting, his brows even more shaggy, his skin even darker.

"Gone?" the fellow asked laconically, pointing to the closed door.

"Dead!" Jock answered simply.

The stranger started. "No! . . . She was my wife," he said quickly.

"The grave-stone says Missus J. Condon," was the response; and there was a touch of pride in the old man's voice.

J. J. POYNTON.

THE PATIENT'S HAND-BELL.

DR. LAWTON sat down to his dinner in a distinctly irritable frame of mind. He had only just come to — Hospital as house-surgeon ; and, in the midst of the hundred and one worries of settling down, he had by no means appreciated finishing a long day's work by having to dance attendance on a particularly fussy "honorary" as the latter made his rounds. Now he expended some of his accumulated vexation in a vicious thump on the knob of the hand-bell which stood within reach of his right hand. Unfortunately he did not derive the relief he expected, for the thing refused to ring, an additional grievance which resulted in the use of vigorous expletives. Luckily these were cut short by the entrance of the ward-maid bringing his dinner, and the meal began to work its due effect on the hungry animal.

Before long the house-surgeon had sufficiently recovered to take his usual amicable view of the world at large, and when the bell which had so firmly resisted his efforts obligingly rang of its own accord, he only looked amusedly surprised. Taking it up he examined it carefully. It was a slightly concave disc of brass on a stand ; but he could neither move the knob at the top, nor the hammer underneath.

As he turned it slowly round a knock came to the door, and the matron entered.

"This is a nice useful sort of bell you've given me, Mrs. Boyce ; you evidently don't mean me to become a nuisance by ringing it too often."

The house-surgeon, in that beneficence of mood produced by the happy combination of a good dinner and an excellent digestion, spoke quite genially, and he was utterly surprised at the effect of

his speech. The matron, a pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, turned a chalky-white ; then she flashed a glance at the ward-maid, who, with a frightened look on her face, was clearing the table, her trembling fingers jingling the glasses and china.

There was a little pause. Then the matron spoke quietly, but rather hoarsely.

"Did you find it hard to ring, doctor ? All you have to do is to press the centre of the knob firmly. It is rather stiff,"—and she showed a small hollow in the knob.

"It's rather a complicated dodge for such a simple thing," was the doctor's comment ; "only don't blame me if you have the trouble of coming for nothing ; it seems to have a little way of ringing all by itself,"—and Dr. Lawton put the bell on the mantelpiece as he prepared to follow the matron out of the room.

Amongst the private hobbies which Dr. Lawton rode with enthusiasm was the study of hypnotism. He possessed a certain degree of clairvoyance, and that and kindred subjects were of the keenest interest to him. His position at the hospital, while affording him ample experience, gave him plenty of time to pursue such studies.

One evening, a month or so after coming to the hospital, he was sprawling comfortably on his big, leather-covered sofa, enjoying a final pipe before turning in. He was ruminating in a lazy sort of way on various phases of his favourite subject ; an extreme quietude pervaded the room, broken only by the striking of his erratic hand-bell. He was used by this time to its vagaries, which he put down to the fickleness of feminine gimcracks ; and now, as it disturbed the silence, it only served to recall, in his semi-comatose condition, the fact that everyone connected with the hospital, whether matron, nurses, ward-maids, or porter, was obviously and undeniably scared at its ring. And . . .

The heavy smell of sleep hung over the long hospital ward, saturated though it was with the odours of iodoform and carbolic acid. The rows of beds veiled in mosquito nets, ranged against

each wall, looked like ghostly catafalques, shrouding unreal forms made grotesque in the dim light by reason of the cradles and other surgical appliances. The figure of the night nurse, as she moved with soft deliberation from bed to bed, cast quaint shadows on the spotless floor. Now and then a patient moaned, hardly disturbing the quietude of the ward, and occasionally the tinkle of a bell called the nurse's attention. Nearly always this sound came from the bed at the farther end of a ward, and again and again the nurse went to the bed, shook up the pillows, smoothed the covering, and tried to soothe the querulous complaints of her patient.

She had done this for perhaps the twentieth time, when the matron appeared at the entrance to the ward. For a moment or two they stood in conversation. Presently the matron walked down the room, stopping to take some small object from the long table. Then she passed on to the bed where the wakeful patient lay feebly tinkling his bell. She, too, tried to soothe his restless complaints; but, seeing he was not in a condition to be reasoned with, she put the bell she carried in place of the one beside him, and turned away.

For a little while the man lay still, his emaciated features working with discontent. Presently, with a huge effort, making every joint in the bedstead creak and rattle, he rolled round, panting with the exertion, starting the perspiration in large drops on his forehead. With a gesture of peevish determination he stretched out his hand for the bell. Half puzzled, half annoyed, he was quick to detect the change. Instead of the handle which he had only to lift and shake, his hand covered an unfamiliar brass disc. An angry glitter came into the glassy eye as he half lifted, half dragged the bell from the locker to the bed. Resting for a few minutes after the exertion, he felt the bell all over with his long, thin fingers, unable to sound it. A purple flush came into his face as he raised himself up to examine it in the dim light, then, with a gurgling gasp, he fell back on his pillows. His jaws gaped, the bell dropped from his nerveless hand and rolled upon the floor, and the feeble, flickering life went out . . .

It seemed to the house-surgeon that he was not more awake now, lying on his comfortable sofa, than he had been a few minutes before, when he so clearly saw the struggles of the dying man to ring his hand-bell.

There it stood on the table near him. Just then the hammer struck against the brass disc. The matron, entering the room, heard it, the usual scared look coming into her face at its sound. She had come to ask for a prescription the doctor had promised her, but she had hard work to steady her voice to make the request. Dr. Lawton went to the writing-table and wrote for a minute. Rising, he crossed to the matron, and spoke :

"Mrs. Boyce, can you tell me how this dent was made in the side of my bell?"

He was a resolute man, and, as he spoke, his voice sounded harshly, almost intimidatingly, in the woman's ear. She made no answer, and for a moment he stood looking compellingly into her eyes.

"It was given," he went on, "to a patient in No. 3 ward, and in his death-struggle it rolled on the floor."

A long, gasping shudder ran through the woman's frame. She threw up her hands as if to shield herself.

"Sir," she said brokenly, "it was not our fault; we did not know. We had no idea he was so ill; the doctors even did not think he was in danger. It was hard to ring, and we often gave it to troublesome patients. They were just as pleased as long as they had a bell of some sort, and he was an extra troublesome one—just the wreck of a man, brought in to end his days in the hospital. He seemed likely to linger on for weeks; failure of the heart's action, the doctor said it was; but as there is a God above I hope and pray that worrying over that bell did not hasten the end. Sir, it has driven us almost demented. Put it where we would it rang, till it frightened the senses out of the patients and nurses. When you asked for a bell, I thought surely *you* had done no harm, and here it might be quiet,"—and the woman broke down, sobbing like one at last relieved of a burden too heavy to be borne.

The next day, a typical Sydney summer day, a half-decked sailing boat was scudding down the harbour. In it were two persons, Dr. Lawton and the man who owned the boat. There was a fairly calm sea, and they turned between the Heads, and out into the ocean. There Dr. Lawton took a small and heavy packet from his coat pocket, and, going forward, quietly dropped it over the bows. Had he been asked, he would hardly have cared to state his reason ; still less could he account for his very genuine feeling of relief as they put about.

F. M. W. G.



THE CORRESPONDENCE OF A LITTLE DRESSMAKER.

I.—HIS LETTER.

NOT being used to letter-writing, I do not know how I ought to begin this. Ought I to call you Miss or Bess? One is too high-faluting, and the other is too familiar-like for me, and we have not seen each other for a good while, although we began to go to work at the same time. Why, now, how long is it since you used to do my sums for me when I could not manage my home-lessons? I mind my old father saying that a letter should always be like a bill, the items put down all spick and span, and nothing in it that is not needed any more than a real business bill would have; but the truth of the matter is I don't know how to say what I want to say, but I suppose there's nothing for it but to put my hand to the helm and steer straight to the point I want to reach. I'm one of those chaps who never get wild over anything one way or the other. They say that's what makes such a good skipper of me. I can always see what is the right thing to do in any sort of weather. I am not saying this to blow my own trumpet, because it comes to me to do the right thing. It isn't my fault. The ketch is my own, and it did not take all of my savings to build her either, the beauty. These are the items. The total is—will you have me for a husband? There, I have got it out at last. You could live in one of the river towns. The thing is you might be lonely while I am away on the Bess. Yes, that's what I've called her. I can't alter the name now, whatever your answer is, because everybody knows her by it. I must not persuade, because if you remember me well enough to like me you will come anyhow, and if

you do not I hope you will not come just to please me. I do not suppose that you will decide all of a sudden, so I will call at the address written on a slip of paper with this in a month's time. God (if He is the chap who looks after things)—God bless you.

Yours, if you like the ownership,

JOHN BAXTON.

P.S.—The ketch is painted green with trimmings of white. I asked an artist chap what colours to have. I remembered that you did not like a red hat and green jacket that sat opposite to us once on the ferry-boat. I had my own cabin-door in red, because it is the colour of colours for me. It's the colour of the gums in the spring.

P.S.—Another item I forgot, a bit of land on the river. The trees are all left. Once you said that houses ought to grow like the trees do. Well, mine has been growing for a good many years in a very small allotment. I hope you won't think in my own head, but, by Jove, perhaps you are tired of reading this by now and having a good laugh at me. I can't help that. I never could help laughing at funny things myself.

P.S.—The flannel-flowers are growing on the bit of land.

II.—THE LETTER SHE SENT.

Dear Mr. Baxton,—

I have never had so hard a task as this of answering your letter. You have honoured me by asking me to marry you. You take a great deal on trust, because you have only memories of me as a child. I have no particular memories of you ; in fact, have never thought of you at all. Do not think this is hard or unkind, but I am sure from the manly tone of your letter that you would rather have the truth than anything else. You remember things I thought and said, and I only remember you as a rough-haired boy who was

fond of laughing. Thanking you and apologising for anything that may seem hard in my letter,

I am, yours very sincerely,

BESS BURNS.

III.—THE LETTER SHE DIDN'T SEND.

My Dearest Old Skipper,—

Your dear letter came like a breath from the sea that you love so well. I remembered very little about John Baxton, but I know the skipper who wrote my letter. Where it is at the present moment I am not going to tell you. But I will tell you that I know it off by heart and say it for my grace while the children are pattering their "We thank Thee, O Lord." Not that I do not thank Him too. I have so much to thank Him for since the fifth of a very wintry month, this year, but my heart is beating thanks all the time. You said, "If He is the chap that looks after things," as though you doubted His existence. Why, my would-be sceptic, who do you think makes people so glad sometimes, if everything is left to chance? But I do not care what you say about it, because I know that, if anyone were in trouble, they would not hesitate to go to Skipper Baxton.

Your wife? I have only one objection. You would get to know me so well that you would not go to your imagination for my good qualities any more, and I should not go to the same source for my romantic visions of you, either. I should dearly like to sail with you in the Bess some of the time. Fancy the wife of a skipper who does not know what it feels like to be on the ocean! Once I was in a sailing-boat, in the harbour, down past Bradley's Head, and we nearly capsized, but it is one of the most splendid recollections I have in my poor brain that will only hold needles, scissors, and paper patterns. The wind sang in the rigging, the sails cried out at the strain, and the waves leapt up and tossed the spray in our faces until the boys were compelled to furl the sail and put up the spinnaker instead. And when we were safely round the head and

in Middle Harbour I felt as though I had had a glimpse of an awful but wondrous life. There, that is all I know of the sea as far as being on it goes. The ferry-boats don't count, because they are very tame compared with the sailer. I have never been since. Mother was so frightened that she made me promise not to go any more.

That much was written on Sunday in church. Now I am waiting for a customer to come and have her dress fitted. It is four o'clock, Saturday afternoon. I am very glad that we makers haven't to marry women, because the wives would have to make their husbands' dresses. You don't think I am going to mend your clothes, do you? Because I am going to drown all needles in the Pacific, and then spend all my days on the bit of land. A house? No, you need n't think of a house. When a house is built, a broom finds its way into the kitchen, and when a woman has hands the broom finds its way into them and they sweep. There's a knock. My customer. I must finish my dissertation on sweeping another time.

If you will promise to keep an automatic machine for sweeping I will not finish my article on the matter, because the rain during the last few days has reminded me that it would not be very pleasant camping in the grounds without a house. I am afraid the flannel-flowers could not hold enough water to keep us dry.

What was it you said about a red hat and a green jacket? Have I been a fashionable dressmaker all these years for nothing? Don't you know that green and purple, and green and red, and green and blue and everything, are fashionable and artistic! When you see me you will know me by the variety of colours I wear. Green hat, blue dress, scarlet necktie, violet sash spotted with pink daisies, and blue roses in my belt. Do you know about the blue roses? Perhaps you have not read "The Light that Failed." One chapter begins "Roses red and roses white sought I for my love's delight. She would none of all my roses, bade me gather her blue posies Half the world I wandered through, seeking where such flowers grew. Half the world unto my quest answered but with

laugh and jest. Oh, 't was but an idle quest. Roses red and white are best." But I am not a visionary, as this might lead you to think; and I can mend torn clothes. So you need n't wonder if all my nonsense is nonsense, or if it is real, because—well, what do you think it is? I do *not* like brooms.

Would you, could you, bring your ketch into the harbour at a given time?—and I would be at South Head (in all my colours) to welcome her and—her skipper. I wonder what you are like. This is my impression from your occupation: short, thick-set and sturdy when off duty, but nimble as a rabbit when a Sou'-Easter blows you towards the rocks and you want to give them a wide berth. You are to admire my sailor-like talk because I have been reading Clark Russell and the *Boys' Own* to collect some nautical terms. Please answer these questions in your next letter, which is to come on the wings of the wind, not by the postman, though he is forgiven for all his old tricks now, since—but never mind the date. Question 1. The gunwale is the piece of wood that goes out from the back of the boat in a slanting direction, is it not? Question 2. Is the bumpkin the little fence round the boat to keep the skipper from falling out? And, Question 3. I know the stays are the bulk of the boat, the part under the water, so you need n't answer that question. If these are mistakes you are to understand that they are intended for jokes, but if they are right they are not intended that way. Ask me questions about the different parts of a boat, because I asked a man who knows all about it, yet there was a strange twinkle in his eyes when he told me some of the things. I wonder if he was amusing himself. But you will tell me There is only one thing better than writing to you, and that is seeing you. Am I always to wait for the contrary winds to move along? Can't they be regulated? Ah, it seems so wonderful to me how you sailors can manage to bring the vessels safe and sound into port when contrary winds spring up. I would never do for a skipper. I can't fight contrary forces. I turn back and go with the wind. I have only seen the vessels at anchor in the harbour, and one gets so accustomed to seeing them stolid and still that it is hard to imagine them alive and full of effort. I

wonder, when you are away on the Pacific and the winds spring up, if I shall be frightened? I don't think so. I shall be sure that the wind never blew and the sea never roared that you could not conquer—and, after all, you are not going to see this. I am just scribbling a fancy letter for recreation.

Good-bye, from

Your Bess.

P.S.—I went to the bush to see if the gums have red leaves, and they have. The spring is late this year. Next spring——

NOTE.

In one of her rare lapses into carelessness the Little Dressmaker must have placed this scribbling-book among some others that were to be given to the Mother for putting into the cake-tins when the cakes were made. And as Mother was tearing the leaves out to put in the tins her eye caught the word "Skipper," and she read the rest of the page, and, becoming deeply interested, looked for the others and read them all. And when the cooking was finished, this little Mother sat down to the table with paper and pen—a most unusual thing, because Bess always wrote her letters and addressed everything that went through the post. But this letter was written by the Mother, addressed, and taken to the post-office, and nothing was said to anyone, and—anyway, there was no more Correspondence.

MAUD LIGHT.



A MARTYR OF NO ACCOUNT.

THE sun looked down unwinkingly upon the rolling sand-dunes covered with a scrabbly undergrowth of mallee, ti-tree and lianas. It looked searchingly and pitilessly down upon the rubble hut with its flat tin-roof and "hessian" substitutes for windows. The everlastings stiffened and curled in the fierce heat, and the earth sizzled and fumed. The sweat from the doctor's horse quivered into the baked atmosphere and left streaks of acrid salt ruled down his heaving sides. No bird called. No insect hummed. The flies were clinging to the shady sides of the limestone boulders, and Sheol was in the air.

Inside the hotel all was as dark as a cellar, and as close. There was the same stillness, save for the heavy breathing of the man and the woman and the children—all lying in one bed smitten by the influenza-devil. The atmosphere of the place was poison—fetid, stagnant, and charged with every foul human product. Only one person besides the doctor moved in the den, slowly and with a mechanical languor. She was a girl of nineteen or twenty, who might have been good to look upon but for neglect and uncleanness and the advance signals of disease. Now and then the man ground his teeth and groaned voicelessly. The woman whined an occasional answer to a question from the doctor. And the children slept the sleep of ptomaines and carbonic acid gas. The girl stood listlessly at the foot of the iron bed, supporting herself, with both lean, horny hands clutching its rusty rail.

"How long have you been down?" asked the doctor of the woman.

"A week," she complained; "and he has been in bed four days; *them*" (indicating the children) "all took bad ten days ago."

The doctor said little, but took temperatures, auscultated chests, and made entries in his note-book. It was a monotonous proceeding, broken only when he went out for a pannikin of warm water from the galvanised tank to wash his thermometer. The man had the headache ; little else of importance. The woman had the cough : the cough that is like the rending of the soul from the body ; but, again, little else of importance. The children had the deadly, helpless, hopeless sleep, from which they only awoke at intervals to moan and toss and complain and go to sleep again.

Just then the man roused himself to whimper for "something for this 'ere pain in my 'ead. It's driving me mad." The woman would "never live through another night if I don't get relief from this corf." The children made no complaint. They slept and breathed ptomaines and carbonic dioxide. And the girl said nothing, but gazed at the doctor with a hazy, half-intelligent stare and gripped the iron bed-rail harder, while her breath came and went in quick, irregular gasps and her nostrils moved like those of a winded hare.

"Anyone to fetch out the medicine?" Perhaps a neighbour would if the doctor would ask. Brandy? Yes. A little chicken-broth? Yes; Violet Pearl would make that.

"Violet Pearl! go and git Jimmy a drink! Can't yer 'ear 'im movin'?" whined the woman in a grieved tone; and then: "The girl is that stoopid and mazy-like, she ain't the leastest good to nobody. As if it was n't bad enough to be nigh onto death without 'avin' to worrit for everything as is wanted!"

As the girl returned, stumbling over the uneven limestone floor, her father broke out: "For Gawd's sake, Violet Pearl, 'ow much longer are you goin' to let this 'an'kerchief dry on my 'ead? W're 's the vinegar and water? Wring it out agin, carn't yer!"

"Sit down," said the doctor to her, a moment later; "let me have a look at *your* chest." Listlessly she unfastened the dowdy calico bodice and bared her thin neck and shoulders, breathing a little harder, but not appearing much interested.

"Hm!" said the doctor, as he moved the end of the stethoscope

here and there, and tapped with his finger-ends on her all too plainly visible ribs ; and then, a little later, "Temperature 104°, pulse 120, left posterior base solid," he wrote in his note-book,—and to the girl he added, "You must go to bed, and stop there ! If you don't do so now, you 'll *have* to to-morrow, and then you may not get out of it again."

A chorus came from the man and woman, "Lord sakes ! doctor, w'at *are* yer talkin' about ? 'oo's to look arfter *us* ? She's the only one as is fit to move ; as for *me*" (the woman continued alone), "*I* could n't get up and do nothink, not if—if—you was to pay me ! an' I'm sure *he* could n't do nothink if he was to get up." The man groaned, and said his head would come off if he were to move, and it was all nonsense talking of Violet Pearl "laying up." She was "always fancying she had something the matter with her."

The doctor sighed, and explained again, and at last lost his temper. "You good-for-nothing brute !" he said, looking contemptuously at the man. "What the devil does your headache matter compared with this girl's chances of dying in forty-eight hours if she does n't go to bed ? She's fifty times worse than your wife here ; and, as for you, you're in no danger at all !"

Then he was sorry he had lost his temper, because it was of no use. The man groaned and the woman whined, and the children slept, and Violet Pearl smiled feebly and breathed a little faster, and said she could get along all right till Aunt Emma came ; Aunt Emma had promised to come the day after to-morrow. No one else would come, because they were frightened of "catching it themselves." And again the doctor sighed, and then swore silently and rode away to arrange with a neighbour to take medicine to them.

Two days later he went again. The same baking heat ; the same white, glaring light from the sand beating on the frowsy "hessian" and "sujee" windows ; and, inside, the same fetid and plague-stricken atmosphere, and a silence this time broken by a few large, yellow-bodied droning flies that boomed and buzzed about the room.

The man was sitting up near the fireplace. The woman

whimpered in a corner, seated on a kerosene-box. The children slept on a "shake-down" of gunny-sacks in another corner. And on the iron bed, covered by a coarse and dingy sheet, which fell into hollows and stood starkly out in horrible, unmistakeable ridges, lay something that had been Violet Pearl.

She had "got along all right" until that morning. Then the poor, willing, helpful spirit had shaken itself free and left its partner, and the man with the headache and the woman with a cough had unwillingly got up to attend to their wants themselves.

C. H. SOUTER.



NICK VEDDER'S GOLD.

OLD Nick Vedder trudged manfully down the cliff-track to Strahan, picking his steps as one who had travelled far and whose pack was heavy.

Morris, seeing him in the distance, awoke from day dreams into a sudden interest. "Here comes old man Vedder again," he said to a companion who sat in the doorway of the Cornucopia Hotel, gazing seaward. But the latter, after turning a pair of blood-shot eyes in the direction of the new-comer, looked out again between the points of the bay and said nothing.

"If I could only track him down"—— began Morris.

"Bah!" impatiently said the other, who was called Maori Jack, "it's always the same cry. Never a soft-headed old hatter can come down from the ranges for tucker but you Strahan loafers must have it that his swag's full of nuggets. There's not an ounce of gold in the whole coast, I tell you."

"But he must be on to a good patch somewhere," insisted Morris. "It was all a plant, him showing us those pyrites specimens and pretending to believe they were the genuine. He's not the lunny you think, I'll swear that. It's all a game to hide that he's on good gold, and it's a game I'm going to take a hand in before long."

But the other, with fine inconsequence, remarked that they'd have a bit of wind behind them this trip, and had better be going before it died. That it would take them two hours good to get across the harbour, anyway, and old Yedolph had got to have his keg that night whatever happened.—And for the traders in illicit spirits, old Yedolph, proprietor of the Cornucopia Hotel, Strahan, was a person whose wishes were not lightly to be disregarded.

Morris, dozing in the bottom of the boat, heard rough steps on the shingle, and, looking up, with the blink of the slanting sun in his eyes, saw Maori Jack and Lang, called "the Butcher," running across the foreshore to where the boat lay beached. On their heels followed Christian, one of the two local policemen; and the other was panting lamentably in the rear as he jogged through the pig-face scrub. Morris pushed the boat clear of the beach, and stood waiting, ready to pole-off. Maori Jack and Lang were over the thwarts in an instant, but as the boat swung clear Christian grasped the oar with which the boat was being levered out into the tide-way. "Stop, Morris!" he began, clapping hand to the pistol in his belt. He did not finish the sentence, for Morris struck at him with the heavy end of a broken oar, so that he fell face downwards in the seaweed.

A gust of wind filled the jib, and the boat edged free of the kelpage out of the lee of the sloping cliffs. But Maori Jack, with a pointing forefinger to the red stain that followed in its wake, said, "My God, you've killed him! I heard his skull crack,"—and sat down on the bottom of the boat, moaning.

"Haul in that — mainsheet, can't you?" answered Morris, savagely, "or we'll have that — riddling us with shot-holes!"—and he cried out derisively to the other constable, who, after firing a couple of ineffective shots, bent over the motionless figure that lay with the water lapping over it in little waves.

And then, looking over at Maori Jack, still crouched in the stern with his gaze bent to the white trail that followed the keel: "You cowards!" Morris said, in sudden rage; "you'll swing for this as well as me!"—answering the horror that spoke in the others' eyes.

The boat slowly made way across to where the shadow of Heemskirk lay on Strahan, and the harbour spread behind them a plate of silver rippled with leaden lines that seared its surface ever and again.

"They caught us with the kegs comin' up the gully," said the Butcher, thickly; "me an' Maori; an' Christian fired at us, an'

we run for the boat, did n't we, Maori?" But Maori Jack, speaking for the first time since they had left the beach, cried out, "My God! look there!"—still pointing astern. There was a white spot over against Dead Island, silhouetted on the dark background of the squall that was heading towards them across the harbour. The police-boat was already on its way to Strahan with the news.

The moon had risen in a ghastly redness when they beached their boat near the mouth of Stockyard Creek, hiding her carefully in the dense tea-tree which was rooted well out into the water. "We may want her again," said Morris, "if"—— There was a grimness in the unfinished sentence that sent the Butcher off into a nervous chuckle.

They got swags and tucker at Lang's hut, and then, crossing the button-grass, were lost in the dark shadows that canopied the track. A couple of miles out they cut the Hobart wire just five minutes after a message had passed along that barred every port in Tasmania to them, and sent half-a-dozen mounted troopers, a few hours later, jingling along the Linda track on their road to Strahan.

The slopes of the Frenchman's Cap are honeycombed with caves; and in the dense scrub that clothes the gullies running in to the base of the mountain, men in search of solitude might defy an army of seekers. The refugees could afford to laugh at the handful who were making ineffectual efforts to discover their whereabouts. And, after a space, this was realised, and the hunt was limited to a patrol party that moved up and down the Linda track investigating the little district outrages this side of Arrowsmith—all laid to the discredit of Morris and his gang of two.

Worn out by exposure and scanty food, the outlaws at last had to abandon their stronghold and make a dash for freedom. Morris recognised the grim necessity when he saw the other two whispering apart, and read their furtive looks. There were two chances: one a traverse through the forest, making to come out at the Huon

below Hobart; the other, to make for the mainland by boat. Sailor Jack, a law-abiding scoundrel of their acquaintance, had caused them to be informed through one of their "telegraphs" that he was willing, for a consideration, to let them have their own boat some dark night at the Gordon mouth. But they had no money, and Sailor Jack, with unfeeling caution, insisted on a spot-cash transaction. "By God, then, we'll risk a dash through Strahan and get the —— boat for ourselves!" said Morris at the end of a weary debate, cutting the knot of their difficulty.

And so it was that one evening they came to be skulking along the Linda track where it takes a bend to avoid a curl of the Collingwood River. They had barely time to plunge into the undergrowth that belted the track, at the sound of horses' hoofs. A squad of troopers jingled by so closely that Morris could with ease have picked off any one of them with his drawn revolver; and their careless talk came plainly to his ears. Another bend, and the troopers were gone.

But Morris, beyond the brushwood, had seen a little spiral of smoke rising among the timber at the foot of the gully. The three of them scrambled down, and, after much reconnoitring, found in the dusk of the myrtles a rough-built hut. And in the doorway sat "old man Vedder," smoking in silent contemplation, as if never a living thing were near beside the "popjockeys" whistling in the underbrush, and the little ring-tail 'possums that lived a friendly life in the blackwood that bent over the hut-roof.

Out of earshot, the three discussed the situation, and came to the one possible decision. Vedder must have provisions and might have gold, a few ounces of which would enable them to purchase Sailor Jack's proffered co-operation.

Maori Jack kept watch amongst the ferns on a little eminence outside the timber, while the others stealthily approached the hut from the rear. The crack of a branch over which Morris tripped in the gloom betrayed them, and the hut-door was hastily shut in their faces, but not before Lang had put a foot over the threshold.

With his shoulders he burst his way in, to find himself gripped in Vedder's thin, nervy arms. As they lay struggling on the floor, Morris pulled a revolver from a pouch and fired into Vedder's side. His grasp on Morris's throat relaxed, and he lay still, while a little red stream ran from under his body and followed the angles of the rough floor.

Lang offered little thanks for the assistance. "You fool!" he cried; "are you mad? This 'll bring the traps down on us,"—and he edged to the door, holding his shirt-sleeve to his throat where Vedder's nails had torn great angry lacerations.

"Fill your tucker-bag!" answered Morris, laughing wildly, and himself continued to ransack every corner of the room in eager haste, tearing down shelves and overturning boxes in wild confusion.

There came the call of a mountain-thrush from up the gully, and Morris whistled back the same note. Lang made for the door with his swag. "They 've heard that shot, damn you!" he said as he went.

Morris, as a last chance, prised up the hearth-stone, saw a little canvas-bag, grabbed it, and rushed out after the others. At the crest above there were three troopers running towards them, not a hundred yards away. The ambushade had been successful.

Morris followed his mate up a cut-off, curving away from the track round the extreme verge of the cliff. At a bend which hid him for the moment from his pursuers, he seized a sapling, swung himself over the edge, and lay quiet as the troopers clattered by on foot, not noticing in the darkness the scared white face that looked up at them out of the bed of fan-fern on the cliff-edge. Morris lay motionless until in the distance two shots rang out—the last, the quick crack of a rifle. Then he slid down from rock to rock, helped by the undergrowth that hid in the fissures weather-worn into the smooth cliff-face, compassing such feats as would have tried stronger nerves than his in fair daylight. Reaching the level where the Broken Creek wound its way, he ran along the open avenue of button-grass flat at the edge of the creek till his breath

failed him, and then he lay panting, with the bag of gold still inside the bosom of his shirt.

He had lost his matches, and could only appraise his treasure roughly by weight. Light for its bulk, he thought; but there must be forty or fifty ounces. Fifty ounces—two hundred pounds! His breathing grew easier, and his lair smoother as he fondled and caressed his bundle. It was dear to him as life itself. It meant life itself! Plenty of assistance to be bought with the contents of this little bag. He rejoiced that Lang—cursed, interfering fool—was dead. The silence that followed the rifle-shot meant that. Shot like a trapped dog, probably, about a quarter of a mile on, where the track “blinded” into the cliff. Morris laughed to himself as he pictured the Butcher standing with his back to the cliff up which he had no time to climb by the rough step-notches cut in the face—perhaps, if fear had made him brave, chancing the steep descent, and pitching from rock to rock till he lay a bundle of red flesh at the foot. Morris started in alarm at the thought. If the Butcher had done a jump, they’d follow him down; if not now, then in the morning. But he quickly reassured himself. There would have been more rifle-shots than the one that came to him. No, Lang—curse him!—was dead on the cliff above, with a carbine bullet in him. Good riddance!

Maori Jack had said that old man Vedder was mad, and never was on gold. Maori Jack could die, too—curse him!—so long as *he* was safe. And then, from pure exhaustion, his brain ceased to work, and he slept where he lay buried in the ferns.

In the morning he awoke and shook himself; and, with a sudden terror, as his memory came back to him, put hand to side to feel if the bag was secure. He opened it and poured out a couple of ounces of the contents on a plate of bark. And then, suddenly, as he played with his fingers among the little heap of shining yellow that glistened in the sun newly breaking above the Frenchman—with eyes dilated and a smile of content set on his features in ghastly petrification—he plunged his hand into the bag and held the palmful of metal to his eyes. Then, with maniacal laughter, he rose

and fled, holding tight in his hand the little canvas bag, while he climbed and climbed like the lost traveller whose wits have left him in the horror of the big bush. And ever and anon came his horrid laugh, growing wilder and wilder in the distance as the mountain sides banded it back and forth in quaintest echo.

The troopers wound their way back to Strahan, bearing among them a motionless burden on a rudely-contrived litter. One of them had his upper arm bound about with a bloody handkerchief.

Sergeant Leggath, who was in advance, suddenly reined back his horse, and pointed dumbly to a big granite boulder alongside the track.

Outlined against the dawn stood a figure familiar, although the clothes hung upon it in strips like the bark of a swamp myrtle. "Stand, in the ~~Queen's~~ name!" called the sergeant, loudly, and a wild laugh and a revolver-shot came in answer. A raw young private, who had been fingering nervously at the trigger of his carbine, sighted and pulled.

Morris stood for two seconds, and then plunged heavily forward and lay still in the undergrowth twenty feet below, with one empty hand dabbling in the current of the pool that washed the base of the boulder.

Down the surface of the stream floated a torn canvas-bag, to which there still adhered some specks of yellow, glittering pyrites.

A. CONWAY.



PRODUCTS.

I PADDLED up the river.

I was tired of civilisation and its products, so I turned my back upon the city and bore up against the tide. The river set its current against me and bore down for civilisation and the city.

The river was an Australian river, and its winding reaches were framed in gnarled stems and twisted branches of quaint device, in twining creepers and drooping, lance-shaped leaves, in rough boulders and grim caves where the black man had crouched beside his boomerang and devoured his feast of shell-fish.

But the caves now bear the legend of Smith, Brown and Jones ; the boulders advertise patent soaps ; among clearings in tortuous gum-bush gleam the white turrets of the modern villa ; on the slopes the creepers have been cut away for the straight, trim beds of artificial garden.

The legends and the soaps, the villas and the gardens, are all products of civilisation.

I paddled up the river.

Suddenly I came upon a Relic of Romance. A dismantled chimney, a ruined wall over which trailed fresh green leaves, an old horse browsing where a cottage room had been, some soft-eyed cattle gazing at me,—all the elements of a domestic idyll. I stepped ashore to shed a few tears over the idyll and analyse the elements ; some of them resolved themselves into disused boilers pervaded by a peculiar odour.

Then I remembered. I stood on the site of a boiling-down establishment which had once polluted the air.

The boiling-down process was a product, and it had moved down the river.

I paddled up.

At a bend of the stream rose a tall building, with straight lines, jutting outhouses and gabled roof. Some terraced cottages stood near, also straight-lined and gable-roofed. Opposite, twining greenery and rich underscrub and starry flannel-flower nestled in the curve under the shadow of the cool cliff. Here, utilitarian energy bristled in the glare.

I went inside the building. It was a factory, with whirring wheels and ponderous grindstones and huge vats, all used in the production of a fancy food for digestions spoiled by civilisation. Strong men were busy among the machines, slight women were busy in the packing-rooms. I spoke to one of the girls: she was young and not uncomely; her head was bent and her nimble fingers folded squares of cardboard into box-form and pasted on the paper covers.

"How many can you make in a day?" I asked.

"About three hundred," she answered in a monotone, her fingers still folding.

Outside, the mullet were leaping, the loose-leaved branches were idly waving to other branches in the water, the laugh of the kookaburra pealed in the distance.

Inside, the sun streamed hotly on pale faces and tired fingers.

I looked at the girl,—her face was dainty and wistful.

"Don't you sometimes hate it?" I said.

The girl looked at me, and answered:

"Yes."

She was a product of civilisation and was drifting down the river. I paddled up.

At last I lighted on my camping-ground. It was roomy and retired, protected by a shore of black ooze and a cliff undisfigured by names; a waterhole was near at hand. I contentedly lighted my camp-fire, and sat down to meditate on products.

Suddenly a boatful of them arrived and took possession. They were undeniable : male products in speckless flannels, straw hats and city respectability ; female products in gay draperies and city smirk.

I fled to my waterhole. There the water dripped with a musical patter down the ruddy cliffs ; the yellow "speckle-eye" flitted about the branches with cheerful chirp ; the sunbeams quivered through the interweaving leaves ; the locusts played their bagpipes with a subdued drone. I was listening to it when the product in flannels swooped down on me, armed with curiosity and conversation.

"Nice place," he said, annexing my waterhole ; "nice soap," appropriating mine ; "nice weather, nice camping-ground, nice to get away from the city now and then."

When I went back the products were gathered round my fire, crooning "Daisy Bell" preparatory to going down the river. I paddled up.

On the oozy bank I spied, afar off, a flamingo stalking in the mud. On nearing, my flamingo resolved itself into an elderly gentleman in a red shirt paddling for bait.

This looked like close intimacy with Nature. I made advances to the flamingo, which presently took a bath, resumed human attire, and conducted me over a thriving orchard.

I admired a fruitful vine on a barren rock. I marvelled at a peach-bearing tree which had sprung into existence in a crevice. I stood beneath a forty-year-old apple-tree which formed a natural bower, and dreamed of the children who had frolicked under its boughs.

The flamingo's voice broke in :

"I don't get half I used to for them apples," it said ; "if I could n't do my own cartage by road I'd give the land up ; it don't pay these days."

The flamingo was also a product.

I paddled up the river.

I swerved aside to enter a sinuous creek, just wide enough for my boat. On one marshy side tall rushes grew, on the other old trees caressed my head with their drooping boughs. The water rippled under the keel, and a dog's baying echoed far away.

I drifted up to a thickly-set orchard, with a soft carpet of green weed beneath the peach- and nectarine-dropping trees. In the foreground a group of men were busy sorting fruit and packing it in market cases.

The master stood up, a tall, well-built young fellow, and as I stepped on shore he came forward with grave courtesy :

"You are a stranger," he said ; "and——" his glance wandered uneasily from my unkempt beard, doubtful garments, and bare feet, to the boat. She was trim and shipshape. His glance returned, satisfied. "And an artist?" he continued ; "a good many come our way. You are welcome. The orchard is more interesting further on, and you will find some fruit to your liking."

So I had lighted on Paradise at last, and civilisation was in the rear. As I lay under the enclosing boughs of a pear-tree that had seen three generations, catching glimpses, between the clustering fruit, of tree-ferns guarding scarlet tomato and ripening watermelon, —with the murmur of the creek, the buzz of the bee, and the hum of the fly in my ear,—I felt I had nothing to reproach Adam and Eve with. Their little interview with the serpent had not robbed me of Nature's spoils.

But another sound disturbed my reverie. A sibilant sound, recalling city products. Creeping forward stealthily, I peered through the branches, and there, in the gathering shadows, I spied a pair—of the species known as larrikin. They were hard at work, too, and the bags beside them suggested weight.

A hand fell on my shoulder.

"Will you help me?" said the quiet voice of the sturdy young farmer. "We are evenly matched, and if we surprise them it will be a sure thing."

It was a sure thing. Within half-an-hour the invaders were on their way towards the hospitable police-station. Apparently

they were waste products. I had come painfully near civilisation again.

"I am much indebted to you," said the farmer. "They would have escaped had I lost time going to look for my men, and really this sort of thing is not to be borne. The rights of property are sacred ; I see you are with me there."

I was not with him there, because I have no property. My boat was a hired one. But I understood.

Still, I was sorry. It struck me that my farmer was a product, too, in his own simple fashion, and that I had not yet wandered far enough.

I wished to paddle up the river.

"Wait," said the farmer ; "you must come up to the house ; we both need a drink after that little affair."

"This stuff won't harm anyone," he added presently, holding up the aromatic golden liquor to the light. "You don't find this brand in every house, and where you do it's not always genuine."

I glanced at the brand ; it was "Bertrandt and Co." Bertrandt is the rich godfather to whom I look for a legacy.

"Do they dare to tamper with it ?" I asked righteously.

Tampering with Bertrandt's brandy might affect my legacy.

"Not with this," laughed the farmer ; "I have special opportunities for securing the real thing,"—and he whispered a word in my ear. "We all like our little comforts, and we like them good," he added cheerily.

"Yes," I answered absently, "we like them good."

Was it really five years since I had written to Bertrandt.

Then I realised that I also was a product.

I paddled down the river.

A. ROSE-SOLEY.

AN ERROR IN ADMINISTRATION.

SMITH was brought up in the city, though his fathers before him had been men of the forest and sea ; and he naturally became a clerk. But the blood asserted itself, and he threw away his billet to go up-country, and finally got a job on a Gippsland selection, where he spent his days and nights in the "cleared country" with the sheep. In Gippsland the country is thoroughly cleared when most of the undergrowth has been hacked or burned away, and the trees ringbarked so that they all stand dead.

Such a country is bad for the nerves, especially for those of a man like Smith, whose father had not been particularly virtuous. It consists of an interminable stretch of gaunt gray timber, and in the morning and evening twilight the dead trees seem to wobble their crooked arms towards one another, and join their skeleton hands in a ghastly, jerky minuet which makes your flesh creep. They begin to do this when you have known them for about a week ; and very soon, if you have a steady head and an adequate supply of tobacco, they stop, and turn into inanimate timber again. But an ex-clerk who has been addicted to inhaling cheap-cigarette smoke, and finds a pipe too much for him, sees their antics for a good while longer. When the darkness has put a stop to this entertainment, the sheep sometimes get restless, and an unquiet flock of sheep at midnight makes a most dispiriting noise, which is a shade worse than the dead stillness. Sometimes, too, a tree falls without any apparent reason just as you are dropping off to sleep ; and when a Gippsland tree comes down it shakes a whole hillside and sounds louder than a cannon. Altogether, a cleared selection in South Gippsland is a cheerless home for a solitary neurotic man.

So it came to pass that Smith contracted many little

peculiarities in his behaviour. He would spend hours on his back, looking up towards the sky and trying to fix the outline of a tree on his mind, and it always vexed him that he forgot one limb as soon as he set himself to master the next. He began to talk to the sheep like human beings, for he had no dog; and he swore at them because they did not answer him in English and he had forgotten the French and Latin he had learnt at school. He got tired of the trees being so gray, and he took to staining them with grass, and watering their bases in the hope of making them sprout again. He was conscious that there was something wrong in his being out there all alone, and he came to the conclusion that he had a deadly enemy somewhere, but he could n't quite settle who it was. It was n't the sheep, for they seemed as frightened as himself; and it was n't the trees, for two of them had fallen within a chain of his hut without doing any damage. After this event he regarded them as his especial friends, and he laughed and clapped his hands when the dance got more than usually mixed—in the mazurka, for instance. At other than twilight hours he sat still and brooded over his wrongs.

One day the boss rode out himself instead of sending a man with Smith's rations, and explained that he intended to build new yards where the hut stood, because the railway was going to pass right there. The shepherd smiled as if he did n't quite understand, and said that the railway would find it rather lonely, and he hoped it would n't hurt his trees. "They're just learning the quadrilles," he said. The boss stared at him and went away. Soon after, a couple of men came and told Smith to take his sheep out of the road, and he drew off and watched them for the rest of the afternoon. When it dawned on him what they were going to do, and he saw the destruction of all his hopes of the grand chain in the evening, he went up and asked them who had ordered it. Then he sat down and thought a great deal about the boss, until at last he came to a decision.

Now it is very clear that the Government of Victoria has much to answer for. If it had not decided to build that railway, Smith's trees would have been left untouched, and he might have gone on

quite harmlessly until it was discovered that big timber was bad for his brain. The sheep would not have been left alone that night while a man with a sharpened knife made his way to the homestead. The kitchen-maid would not have been driven screaming along the passage, three men would have been without a very exciting experience of ten minutes' duration, and one of them would not walk lame. Also, the boss's only son would be two months younger and a good deal stronger, and his wife would be able to give an intelligent answer to a simple question—which, as matters stand, she cannot do.

Smith came out, probably, better than anyone else. He was supported for six months in an asylum, and then sent to a situation up Yackandandah way, where he will not see a stretch of big timber in a lifetime. If he ever happens to get into different country, most probably someone will be murdered.

A. C. M'CAY.



A BRIDAL PARTY AND A DOG.

IT was afternoon when I rode into Bear Gully. I was bound for the railway-station five miles north, and at first thought to ride straight through the almost-deserted hamlet. Bear Gully had once a dozen or so houses. That was before the railway-station opened in the north. Now the pub. was the only inhabited dwelling in the place, and it lingered partly to catch teamsters and occasional wanderers, and partly, seemingly, because it was used to lingering there and never thought of shifting.

The day was hot and steamy after late rain. Several puddles of water studded the flat in front. The pub. verandah was odiously dirty. Mud was spattered on the posts and on the weatherboard walls, and the entire establishment looked disreputable in the extreme. A brown shabby dog of mixed collie and retriever breed lay at the far end of the verandah, and eyed me in a peculiarly suspicious way. However, throwing the bridle over a hook, I walked in.

"Anyone here?" I asked. There were glasses on the counter and bottles on a shelf behind, but no one in attendance.

"Anyone here?" I repeated. Thinking the publican might be temporarily busy elsewhere, I turned out of the bar to have a look at the dog, whose appearance had attracted me.

The brute had partly struggled to his feet and was snapping at something, to me invisible, which seemed to annoy him. He was as dirty as his surroundings, with large lumps of mud sticking here and there to his shaggy sides. As I approached him, in making a particularly vicious snap over his right shoulder, he overbalanced and rolled on his back. I went closer. His eyes were shut, but he moved his head spasmodically, and every few seconds snapped at

some unseen enemy. I judged his complaint to be a kind of local paralysis combined with illusions of the senses.

Going back, I re-entered the bar. To my surprise a red, swollen-faced man sat behind the counter.

"Hello," I said, "I thought the house abandoned. Isn't it hot?" The man was looking towards, but beyond me. His eyes were bloodshot and the lids heavy.

"What'll y' 'ave?" he asked, almost in a whisper. I wished I had ridden on, but as things had gone so far I determined to make the best of them.

"A little whisky," I answered. "It's terrible work riding in this clammy heat." He gripped the counter with one hand, while reaching for the bottle with the other. He looked at the bottle as he looked at me—that is, he appeared to be looking far away beyond it. Catching it, however, he placed it before me.

"You don't seem very well," I remarked.

No answer.

"That's a queer dog of yours outside," I added.

No answer.

I swallowed the drink and placed a shilling on the counter. The man put the bottle back, picked up the shilling in a dreamy, death-like silence, and then, with a shout that shook the rafters, jumped several feet in the air, and turning round, rushed through the bar entrance into an adjoining room. Recovering from the shock, I followed him. I had heard a crash, and concluded he had fallen over something. He had; and there he lay on the floor, evidently injured, though to what extent I could not tell.

"What's up?" I asked. He made desperate efforts to rise, but knee or ankle was damaged and he could not get on his feet. But he snapped at me with his mouth, and, when I stood aside out of his view, he snapped and struck at objects invisible to me.

"Who the mischief's looking after this den?" I mused, walking through the house to the rear of the premises. In a large room, like a bushman's dining-room, my eye caught a youngish man in shirt and trousers, sitting at a heavy table, engaged at some absorbing

work. His face was toward me, and, though he was unshaven and unwashed, I at once set him down for a city clerk.

"Well, now," I began, walking in; "I'm glad to come on someone in his senses. What's up with the party inside?" By this time I noticed that the heavy wooden table was pitted all over with small cavities, some the size of marbles, and others as large as eggcups, and that my new acquaintance was busily digging out a fresh one with his sheath knife. He did not notice my words, but worked on.

"What do all these holes mean?"

"*Sh—sh!*" he whispered. "I'm getting 'em all out. Oh, they can't escape me! Centipedes—see? Scorpions—see? I'm getting 'em out! I'm getting 'em out!"

Whipping a wriggling shaving of wood from the hole he worked on, he threw it on the floor and, with blood-curdling yells, jumped and danced on it. When the fit was over he resumed his seat and went on calmly with his work.

As I unhitched my horse the cross-bred collie, still snapping at the air, wriggled to the edge of the verandah, and rolled over into a pool of water on the road beneath.

I did n't look back. "I'll report the facts to the authorities," I said, "and leave the job to them." On turning the first bend in the road I came flush on a horse and trap.

"Ye're fram beyant?" asked a sergeant of police who drove the trap. "Did ye lave them all well?" Then he informed me that he and the constable sitting beside him were bound for the Bear pub. to carry away the remaining inmates.

"Ye see," went on the sergeant, "we tuk away the wimmin this marnin'. It all came about through a weddin' as done it. The darter of the oul' man was spliced three weeks ago to a young fella, a clerk from town, an' they kep' the cellybrashun up till ivery man jack has the d.t.'s. I tuk away the bride an' 'er mother an' an oul' woman cook in this thrap this marnin', an' now I'm goin' back for the oul' man an' the bridegroom."

"And the dog?" I said.

"An' the dog," said the sergeant. "The dog's ivery bit as bad as the rest. It's the worst case of profligacy iver occurred in this part in my time, an' the dog's as bad's any wan of them. This'll burst up the Bear pub. annyway, an' it's a good job. Will ye ride back wid us?"

"No, sergeant, thank you. I'm in a hurry. I'll not want to see the bridal party or its dog any more."

OMEGA.



BROKEN CHINA.

“HOW beautiful your hair is, Chalice!”

He had often said it before, but whenever he saw his wife's rich brown hair hanging down, his artistic soul demanded the bestowal of praise upon it.

“I do believe that is the tenth time this week you have said that,” she replied, laughing up at him. “Yes, I have lovely hair, but you should have seen my mother's. Hers almost swept the ground.”

He walked nearer to her.

“What a lonely life you have had, my dear! Your father killed, your mother dead, and your brother—how old did you say your brother was when he was drowned, Chalice?”

She bent to tie her shoe. He did n't see her face whiten.

“He was just twenty,” she said faintly, from her stooping position.

“And you have been alone, except for two old servants, ever since—till now?”

“Yes,” came more faintly.

She made an effort.

“Yes, I was very lonely. But I don't think of those days now. They have gone. All my best days are before me. O, Ted!” with the fervour of truth in her voice, “I thank God every night for my happiness—for having met you. I love you so. I would die for you!”

She put her arms round his neck. “I don't believe any woman ever loved a man as I do you.”

He laughed and kissed her.

“It was well, too, for me that I stumbled across your home, Chalice.”

She dropped her arms and spoke hurriedly. "Ted, when shall we go and see the Gap? You promised me a week ago, and the wet weather may set in any time."

"We can go to-day if you like."

"To-day? This morning?" He nodded. "Oh, that will be splendid."

She clapped her hands, and her face flushed with pleasure at the thought of the happy day before her. She was all eagerness to start.

"I will run and put on my dress now. And you won't be long with the horses, will you? I will ride Lightning to-day."

A horse galloped up the path. Chalice could n't see, but she knew who it was. It was Tom O'Connor from Tawonga station with the mails. Her husband went to meet him; she heard a few murmuring words, and, as was the usual custom, heard Tom dismount and walk into the dining-room with Ted. She knew she need n't hurry in dressing now, for Tom was such a talker. She played lovingly with her wedding-ring. Three months married! How the time had passed! It seemed only yesterday that—God! she must n't commence to think, else—she began humming to drown her thoughts. How beautiful the wattle looked! There was a branch bending down to the verandah, laden with blossoms. The yellow would look pretty against her dress.

She finished dressing, and stepped out and picked a bunch.

A slight, stifled scream escaped her as she looked towards the horse. This was n't Tom's sturdy little chestnut—this great, black, sweating horse! It turned its head. She staggered against the wall. What a fool she was! More men than one had a black horse with a white mark on its forehead. It must be a station-hand's. She would go and pat it. She went up closer. Her hand extended, but swiftly drew back again. Her eyes dilated with fright and fear. *The stitches!* The stitches in the saddle-cloth that she had sewn in six months ago stared her in the face!

Blindly groping her way to her window, she wondered, dully, what they were saying in the dining-room. She must hear. She

must know. She would go along the verandah. No, they would see her, they would hear her—she would go through the bath-room, and steal quietly along till she came to the door.

As she crept along the hall, a deep, mellow voice was speaking. She clenched her teeth.

Edward Murray stood with his back to the speaker, and played with his watch-chain.

"Chalice is n't even her name. She adopted it as a tribute to her own beauty. She would have liked every man to have drunk of her. Many men have. Even I ; and even "—with a savage glance at the obstinately-turned back—"you !"

The woman crouched outside like a beaten cur.

"She drove her old mother to the grave. She has played with men as with flowers, tossing them aside when tired of their fragrance. She would have been another man's mistress, if I had not come along—so she chose me. The house you took her from three months ago was my house. And if you had looked you would have found a little grave——"

The door-handle made a rasping noise—the man stopped speaking ; the handle turned, and before he could rise from his chair the slash of a riding-whip had come across his face.

Furious and blinded with pain, he sprang forward, but recoiled as he saw Chalice.

All her anguish and terror seemed to have frozen into her frame. Her arm was held high up, the whip grasped in her tense fingers.

The man turned his eyes away from her white face.

There was a moment's silence.

She felt she was going mad. She should not have come in so soon. She should have waited till her husband had spoken, then—— O God ! why didn't he speak ? Why didn't he move ? Even shuffle his feet—anything ! Anything was better than his standing like a silent, awful Fate behind her !

She caught the click of his chain, as he threw it up and down. He sauntered up to her.

"A fine attitude, madam, a fine attitude—that of outraged virtue—or furious vice, eh? It has a fine effect."

Her body relaxed; the whip dropped to the floor.

He put his hand on her shoulder and half-whispered into her ear.

"So your lonely life has had its compensations, my little wife? The chirping of the cricket, the trilling of the creek, the rustle of the gum-leaves, the scent of eucalyptus—all these things you used so poetically to tell me about, have not, then, always satisfied your delicate womanly instincts?"

He paused.

"You do not speak. Why don't you call this man a liar? Perhaps," taking her hands and patting them, "you are shy!"

She looked up at him, all her dumb agony in her eyes.

"As shy, perhaps, as the day I knocked at your door, down by the creek, and you opened it, and I looked at you; your head drooped with shyness—my little innocent one!"

She shivered as he passed his hand caressingly over her hair.

"As shy, perhaps, as the day you lent me your—er—father's horse—a black one,"—smiling over her head to the man opposite him,—“with—er—a white mark on its forehead. And—do you remember?—we rode, and rode, and rode, and all else was forgotten. And your hair came tumbling——”

"Edward! Edward!"

"Over your shoulders, and I—kissed—you. And your sweet, maidenly blushes!—ha—ha—ha!"

She broke into sobs.

"Ah, we had merry times down in that little home. Every day brought forth a new pleasure. Every day was coloured with our joy—our happiness."

Jack Morton's eyes glared at him.

"How timidly your little hands used to seek mine! How your eyes used to sparkle as I approached!"

"Don't, don't! That time is sacred to me."

"How lovingly your arms twined round my neck! How soft your whispers!"

"Have pity——"

"Ah, Chalice, forgive me! I have done wrong. This life I have brought you to is too rough—too coarse a setting for such a jewel. You must obey the cravings of your spotless purity; return to the creek that calls you, to the home that waits for you—to your own virtuous loneliness."

His hand slid down to hers.

Jack Morton anticipated him. He rushed forward, snatched Chalice's hand, wrenched the ring off, and threw it with all his force into the other's face.

There was a moment of terrified silence. Mad fury possessed both men. They looked at each other, the white, quivering face of Murray contrasting strangely with the dark, distorted countenance of Morton.

A startled sob came between them. Murray recovered himself. He flicked some dust off his coat. How foolish, and what a waste of energy to lose his temper over these two wretches!

He spoke in a smart, business-like way. "I thank you, my man. You have performed that little duty more forcibly than ever I would have done. You had both better go now. The woman's belongings will be sent on to the station."

He went towards the door. She ran after him, hardly understanding.

"Ted, Ted!—what do you mean? You are not leaving me?" Her voice grew shrill with fear. "You will not go from me? No, no, you will have pity; you . . . Ted! don't go, don't go!" She caught his sleeve, in a vain effort to stop him. He pushed her back. "Oh, have mercy! I love you so. I—oh, God! don't leave me." Her sobs choked her. "Let me stay with you. I will not speak to you, nor touch you; only let me see you sometimes. Edward," pleadingly, "I will be your servant."

"I always insist on my servants being clean!"

She gave a little moan. "Yes, yes; but you are lifting me.

You have shown me Heaven. No, no, don't go!—you have shown me——” He found it a difficulty to pass through the door with her clinging to him. “God! For the sake——” His foot advanced and tripped hers. “For the sake—— Ted! don't leave me!”

She fell down.

“You brute!” roared Jack Morton to the closed door.

He ran to pick her up; but she was shrieking and beating her hands against the door, and calling on her husband. He dropped his head in his hands. He had never seen grief like this before; and something like remorse for what he had done was coming to him.

After a little while her cries grew fainter; her breath came in exhausted gasps.

He raised her up.

“Chalice, my poor Chalice!” he said, brokenly; “don't cry, dear. You must come and live with me again. It shall be as if this man had never lived. Hush! And—God forgive me!—I will put a ring on your finger this time. My ring will be more sacred, more binding, in my sorrow, than his was, in his weak ignorance. Come, Chalice, come back with me.”

“Yes, yes, I will come. I don't care, now,” she said, wildly. “Nothing matters now. Everything is over. Only take me away; a long way from here.”

Morton swore, under his breath, at the hollow misery in her eyes.

He drew her on to the verandah and swung her into the saddle. He sprang up behind her. The horse's head was turned, and they moved down the path. They had not gone very far when she cried out to stop the horse.

“Stop, stop!—pull up!” She dragged fiercely at the reins. “Jack, pull up! I must see him again. I can't go away yet. Loose your hands! He may have called me, and I not have heard him. He may—with a wild hope—“have relented. Let me go—let me go!”

She dropped to the ground, and ran back, the thought of his calling her uppermost in her mind.

"Come back, Chalice, come back!"

"No, no ; I must see him."

"Well, there he is—curse the fellow—look!"

"Where—where?"

"There, by that window"—pointing with his whip.

She looked, and dropped her head.

Ted was standing, delicately waving his hand to them.

She was very quiet as Jack lifted her up again, and her face was hidden in his sleeve as they galloped away.

HOIYA.



THE DISPERSION OF MRS. BLACK.

“**I** KNOW,” said old Bill, meditatively, “that it takes more ’n one to get up a proper dispersion, but you will find that old woman Black were dispersed pretty wide, for all that.

“Yer see, it were this way. Old Sol Black were a whaler down at Maketu, and like all sich, he got a Maori wife and a lot o’ kids. Well, his old ’ooman met with a haccident one day in war-time. Old Sol used to help the tribe in battle, and on this hoccasion they got well licked, and Sol’s wife got eat. Sol thought he would get a white woman to look after the kids, and he goes to Auckland in the Flying Fish and brings one back.

“She were a widder wot never had no kids of her own, which was just into Sol’s hand. She were a big, fat heifer, and it took a tidy plarster to make her a frock, so she seldom wore one. She minded the kids all right till they got spliced or went off on their own hook.

“Arter that the old ’ooman used to go about the pah jabbering and chiacking with one and another. She were generally barefooted, just like a Maori woman. She kep’ pretty straight, ’cept when there was any rum or square-face about; then she ’d get her whack anyhow.

“They ’d shifted to Rotorua by this time, and their whāre was on the lake shore; but most of the natives lived on the hill. Old Sol was away ketching crawfish in the lake when one on ’em on the hill got up a five-gallon keg o’ rum. The old ’ooman smelt it, and was up there on the tear quick. It were dark when she tacked for home, pretty well boozed. There was a lot of hot-springs and cooking-holes and biling-pools o’ all sorts just off the track; but, Lord! she ’d been along that track all hours.

“Well, there wasn’t no one at home, so nobody missed her, anyhow. The old go-ashore which was their bell was a-sounding for morning prayers, for they prays twice a day, do them natives, quite public in the church, and when the first lot got a bit on the track they saw a blanket which had caught by a corner on a old tea-tree stump, right acrost the track, and the further corner was just on the edge of the bilingest of all them biling springs.

“When they looked in there was a lot of hile on the top, and as the water heaved and rolled with the heat of hell a lot of whitish, yallerish, flaky and ropy-looking stuff was a-rolling round with the hile and water. There was some o’ them fresh green ferns on the further edge a-hanging over, and by-an’-by a bigger bile-up than common fetched some white rag out from hunder the ferns all lapped and twisted round summut hard. The niggers ’d got to know afore this what was the matter from the blanket, and when they saw the white rag they was certint, ’cos them was all her togs the night afore.

“They fished out the rag and found it were lapped and twisted round the neck and breast of pore Mrs. Black. The head was biled off and likewise the arms and backbone was broke through the middle, what with the rousting about it got when the bile was most wiolent, and I allus heard say she were a tender critter.

“They did n’t know what to do all to wonst. They thought if they got her out and put her in a soap-box she’d run through the jints. A’ larst one on ’em who’d been to school said the Rumuns used to put their dead ’uns into jars arter burning on ’em to ashes, and stick ’em on the mantel where they was allus handy to cry over. He thought a callybash, such as they put birds and pork in when they are biled down in their own fat, would about fill the bill, and it would comfort old Sol to have his wife in a funeral hurn, as he called it. He was a rare schollard for a native, that chap.

“They agreed to that, and got some old bent tin and pumpkin shells, and a canoe baler and a long-handle shovel, and ladled the old girl out. The bones was mostly low down fooling around in the heddy where the bottom of the hole ought to be.

"They kep' the bones separate, and when the head came out from hunder the ferns it were quite white and nothin' on it to speak on. Some of the red hairs was a-twisted round the other pieces, and some was in locks of hair by themselves among the hile. Bein' as she were a copper-topped 'un, the hairs were n't as heasy to see as black 'uns, but they was very careful.

"They got a good large gourd a couple of foot high, open at the top, and they put all the small goods in; but the worst job was skimming off the hile, for they said they would like her to be all there. But she were n't, for I see a good-looking Maori wench a-fishing out the finger and toe-nails with a pawa shell, and she wore 'em for a necklace the next day.

"The shovel came in werry handy for skimming the hile. The worst was keeping the water out; and they said if that was scooped up and put in the *hipu*, it might be unpleasant for various reasons to Sol when he went to weep beside the hurn.

"A' larst they got her fixed and a flat bit of tin on the openin', and they said they'd stand the jimmy on top of that to give it a proper finish like. It were a melancholy business,—some o' the women was a-crying and a-howling all the time. The bones they tied together verry neat and put 'em in a case o' titara bark what had had smoked heels in. Then they concluded to put it in the store out of the way of the kids, who might think she were pork if left in the whāre.

"When Sol came back he was quite pleased with the pains they'd took, and he had a good look at her and gave her a nod when he left, but he did n't go and weep beside the hurn, and the schollard said that was because he was n't a Rumun which they thought he were.

"Well, she stood on that shelf for years and nobody took no liberties with her, and the sight of her bony face kept the kids away, till one day a tourist came along who wanted to get the skull of a cannibul for a skyantific society, and one o' the young men sold Mrs. Black's skull for half-a-crown and a long beer.

"That was the beginning on it. Yer see, there was no brand on when the head was was gone, same as all on us, and no telling what was inside the *hipu*. Old Sol never went there, and the tomb of Mrs. Black was neglected by him as ought to have decked it with flowers as is common.

"By-an'-by the kids got to shovin' their fingers in when they got a chance, but they seemed to want henthooism, and she did n't get scattered much that way; but there was an old *tohunga* priest there as carved things out o' human bone, and he came acrost the bark case o' bones one day when he was a-skirmishing around for dried heels. He looted 'em, and made two flutes and some hornaments they call *aurei* and a search-warrant for the hair and a whole biling o' fish-hooks out of Mrs. Black's bones, and, bein' a noted *tohunga*, he sold 'em to all the tribes of both islands.

"Then they was going pigeon-shooting one day and one of the young fellows dropped on the *hipu* with Mrs. Black in it. Yer see, she looked summut like mutton-bird hile. Well, they hiled their guns with her and their bridles and saddles, and them as 'ad boots hiled them; and the thick part of her at the bottom of the *hipu* they threw into the lake, and the gold and silver fishes scoffed her, and that just about spread out poor Mrs. Black.

"Well, she worn't missed for a long time, till at larst one of Sol's daughters came and asked after her foster-mother, and they went to look and could n't find her. It all came out though when they came to ask, and them as had took pains to ladle her out and bottle her was pretty wild, but Sol said it did n't matter as he knowed on, she always was a terror to wander, but it might be orkard at the last trump, but then agen he thought the longer she kep' away from the Judgment the better for her, and perhaps it were all for the best Amen.

"Thanks, boss; I don't mind if I do."

And Bill did.

ROBIN STUDHOLME.

WHITE-WHEN-HE'S-WANTED.

BUCKALONG was a big freehold of some eighty thousand acres, belonging to an absentee syndicate, and therefore run in a most niggardly style. There was a manager on two hundred pounds a year, Sandy M'Gregor to wit—a hard-headed old Scotchman known as “four-eyed M'Gregor,” because he wore spectacles. For assistants, he had half-a-dozen of us—jackercos and colonial-experiencers—who got nothing a year, and earned it. We had, in most instances, paid premiums to learn the noble art of squatting, which now appears to me hardly worth studying, for so much depends on luck that a man with a head as long as a horse's has little better chance than the fool just imported. Besides the manager and the jackeroos, there were a few boundary-riders to prowl round the fences of the vast paddocks. This constituted the whole station staff.

Buckalong was on one of the main routes by which stock were taken to market, or from the plains to the tablelands, and *vice versa*. Great mobs of travelling sheep constantly passed through the run, eating up the grass and vexing the soul of the manager. By law, sheep must travel six miles per day, and they must keep within half-a-mile of the road. Of course we kept all the grass near the road eaten bare, to discourage travellers from coming that way. Such hapless wretches as did venture through Buckalong used to try hard to stray from the road and pick up a feed, but old Sandy was always ready for them, and would have them dogged right through the run. This bred feuds, and bad language, and personal combats between us and the drovers, whom we looked upon as natural enemies. Then the men who came through with mobs of cattle used to pull down the paddock fences at night, and slip the cattle in for refreshments ;

but old Sandy often turned out at two or three a.m. to catch a big mob of bullocks in the horse-paddock, and then off they went to Buckalong pound. The drovers, as in duty bound, attributed the trespass to accident—broken rails, and so on—and sometimes they tried to rescue the cattle, which again bred strife and police-court summonses.

Besides having a particular aversion to drovers, old M'Gregor had a general "down" on the young "colonials," whom he comprehensively described as a "feckless, horse-dealin', horse-stealin', crawlin' lot o' wretches." According to him, a native would sooner work a horse to death than work for a living, any day. He hated any man who wanted to sell him a horse. "As ah walk the street," he used to say, "the folk disna stawp me to buy claes nor shoon, an' wheerfore should they stawp me to buy horrses? It's 'Mister M'Gregor, will ye purrchase a horrse?' Let them wait till I ask them to come wi' their horrses."

Such being his views on horseflesh and drovers, we felt no little excitement when one Sunday, at dinner, the cook came in to say that "a drover-chap outside wants the boss to come and have a look at a horse." M'Gregor simmered awhile, and muttered something about the "Sawbath day"; but at last he went out, and we filed after him to see the fun.

The drover stood by the side of his horse, beneath the acacia trees in the yard. He had a big scar on his face, apparently the result of a collision with a tree; and seemed poverty-stricken enough to disarm hostility. Obviously, he was "down on his luck." He looked very thin and sickly, with clothes ragged and boots broken. Had it not been for that indefinable self-reliant look which drovers—the Ishmaels of the bush—always acquire, one might have taken him for a swagman. His horse was in much the same plight. A ragged, unkempt pony, pitifully poor and very footsore—at first sight, an absolute "moke," but a second glance showed colossal round ribs, square hips, and a great length of rein, the rest hidden

beneath a wealth of loose hair. He looked like "a good journey horse," possibly something better.

We gathered round while M'Gregor questioned the drover. The man was monosyllabic to a degree, as real bushmen generally are. It is only the rowdy and the town-bushy that are fluent of speech.

"Good morrning," said M'Gregor.

"Mornin', boss," said the drover, shortly.

"Is this the horrse ye have for sale?"

"Yes."

"Aye," and M'Gregor looked at the pony with a business-like don't-think-much-of-him air; ran his hand lightly over the hard legs, and opened the passive creature's mouth. "H'm," he said. Then he turned to the drover. "Ye seem a bit oot o' luck. Ye 're thin like. What's been the matter?"

"Been sick with fever—Queensland fever. Just come through from the North. Been out on the Diamantina last."

"Aye. I was there mysel'," said M'Gregor. "Have ye the fever on ye still?"

"Yes—goin' home to get rid of it."

It should be explained that a man can only get Queensland fever in a malarial district, but he can carry it with him wherever he goes. If he stays, it will sap all his strength and pull him to pieces; if he moves to a better climate, the malady moves with him, leaving him only by degrees, and coming back at regular intervals to rack, shake, burn, and sweat its victim. Queensland fever will pull a man down from fifteen stone to nine stone faster, and with greater certainty, than any system of dosing yet invented. Gradually it wears itself out, often wearing its patient out at the same time. M'Gregor had been through the experience, and there was a slight change in his voice as he went on with the palaver.

"Where are ye makin' for the noo?"

"Monaro—my people live in Monaro."

"How will ye get to Monaro if ye sell the horrse?"

"Coach and rail. Too sick to care about ridin'," said the

drover, while a wan smile flitted over his yellow-grey features. "I've rode him far enough. I've rode that horse a thousand miles I would n't sell him, only I'm a bit hard up. Sellin' him now to get the money to go home."

"How old is he?"

"Seven."

"Is he a good horse on a camp?" asked M'Gregor.

"No better camp horse in Queensland," said the drover. "You can chuck the reins on his neck, an' he'll cut out a beast by himself."

M'Gregor's action in this matter puzzled us. We spent our time crawling after sheep, and a camp horse would be about as much use to us as side-pockets to a pig. We had expected Sandy to rush the fellow off the place at once, and we could n't understand how it was that he took so much interest in him. Perhaps the fever-racked drover and the old camp horse appealed to him in a way to us incomprehensible. We had never been on the Queensland cattle-camps, nor shaken and shivered with the fever, nor lived the roving life of the overlanders. M'Gregor had done all this, and his heart (I can see it all now) went out to the man who brought the old days back to him.

"Ah, weel," he said, "we ha'e na much use for a camp horrsse here, ye ken; wi'oot some of these lads wad like to try theer han' cuttin' oot the milkers' cawves frae their mithers." And the old man laughed contemptuously, while we felt humbled and depraved in the eyes of the man from far back. "An' what'll ye be wantin' for him?" asked M'Gregor.

"Reckon he's worth fifteen notes," said the drover.

This fairly staggered us. Our estimates had varied between thirty shillings and a fiver. We thought the negotiations would close abruptly; but M'Gregor, after a little more examination, agreed to give the price, provided the saddle and bridle, both grand specimens of ancient art, were given in. This was agreed to, and the driver was sent off to get his meals in the hut before leaving by the coach.

"The mon is verra hard-up, an' it's a sair thing that Queensland fever,"—was the only remark that M'Gregor made. But we knew that there was a soft spot in his heart somewhere.

And so, next morning, the drover got a crisp-looking cheque, and departed by coach. He said no word while the cheque was being written; but as he was going away the horse happened to be in the yard, and he went over to the old comrade that had carried him so many miles, and laid a hand on his neck. "He ain't much to look at," said the drover, speaking slowly and awkwardly, "but he's white when he's wanted." And just before the coach rattled off, the man of few words leant down from the box and nodded impressively, "Yes, he's white when he's wanted."

We didn't trouble to give the new horse a name. Station horses are generally called after the man from whom they are bought. "Tom Devine," "The Regan mare," "Black M'Carthy," and "Bay M'Carthy" were amongst the appellations of our horses at that time. As we didn't know the drover's name, we simply called the animal "The new horse" until a still newer horse was one day acquired. Then, one of the hands being told to take the new horse, said, "D'yer mean the *new* new horse, or the *old* new horse?" "No," said the boss, "not the new horse—that bay horse we bought from the drover. The one he said was white when he was wanted."

And so, by degrees, the animal came to be referred to as the horse that's white when he's wanted, and at last settled down to the definite name of "White-when-he's-wanted."

White-when-he's-wanted did n't seem much of an acquisition. He was sent out to do slavery for Greenhide Billy, a boundary-rider who plumed himself on having once been a cattle-man. After a week's experience of "White," Billy came in to the homestead disgusted—the pony was so lazy that he had to build a fire under him to get him to move, and so rough that it would make a man's

nose bleed to ride him more than a mile. "The boss must have been off his head to give fifteen notes for such a cow."

M'Gregor heard this complaint. "Verra weel, Mr. Billy," said he, hotly, "ye can just tak' one of the young horrses in yon paddock, an' if he bucks wi' ye, an' kills ye, it's yer ain fault. Ye're a cattle-man—so ye say—dommed if ah believe it. Ah believe ye're a dairy-farmin' body frae Illawarra. Ye don't know neither horrses nor cattle. Mony's the time ye never rode buck-jumpers, Mr. Billy!"—and with this parting shot the old man turned into the house, and White-when-he's-wanted came back to the head station.

For a while he was a sort of pariah. He used to yard the horses, fetch up the cows, and hunt travelling sheep through the run. He really was lazy and rough; and we all decided that Billy's opinion of him was correct, until the day came to make one of our periodical raids on the wild horses in the hills at the back of the run. Every now and again we formed parties to run-in some of these animals; and, after nearly galloping to death half-a-dozen good horses, we would capture three or four brumbies, and bring them in triumph to the homestead. These we would break-in; and, by the time they had thrown half the crack riders on the station, broken all the bridles, rolled on all the saddles, and kicked all the dogs, they would be marketable (and no great bargains) at about thirty shillings a head.

Yet there is no sport in the world to be mentioned in the same volume as "running horses"; and we were very keen on it. All the crack nags were got as fit as possible, and fed-up beforehand; and on this particular 'occasion White-when-he's-wanted, being in good trim, was given a week's hard-feed and lent to a harum-scarum fellow from the Upper Murray, who happened to be working in a survey-camp on the run. How he did open our eyes! He ran the mob from hill to hill, from range to range, across open country and back again to the hills, over flats and gullies, through hop-scrub and stringybark ridges; and all the time White-when-he's-wanted was on the wing of the mob, pulling double. The mares and foals dropped out; then the colts and young stock pulled up deadbeat;

and only the seasoned veterans of the mob were left. Most of our horses caved in altogether; one or two were kept in the hunt by judicious nursing and shirking the work, but White-when-he's-wanted was with the quarry from end to end of the run, doing double his share; and at the finish, when a chance offered to wheel them into the trapyard, he simply smothered them for pace, and slewed them into the wings before they knew where they were. Such a capture had not fallen to our lot for many a day, and the fame of White-when-he's-wanted was speedily noised abroad.

He was always fit for work, always hungry, always ready to lie down and roll, and always lazy. But when he heard the rush of the brumbies' feet in the scrub, he became frantic with excitement. He could race over the roughest ground without misplacing a hoof or altering his stride, and he could sail over fallen timber and across gullies like a kangaroo. Nearly every Sunday we were after the brumbies, until they got as lean as greyhounds and as cunning as policemen. We were always ready to back White-when-he's-wanted to run-down, single-handed, any animal in the bush that we liked to put him after—wild horses, wild cattle, kangaroos, emus, dingoes, kangaroo-rats—we barred nothing, for, if he could n't beat them for pace, he would outlast them.

And then one day he disappeared from the paddock, and we never saw him again. We knew there were plenty of men in the district who would steal him; but, as we knew also that there were plenty more who would "inform" for a pound or two, we were sure that it could not have been the local "talent" who had taken him. We offered good rewards and set some of the right sort to work; but we heard nothing of him for about a year.

Then the surveyor's assistant turned up again, after a trip to the interior. He told us the usual string of backblock lies, and wound-up by saying that out on the very fringe of settlement he had met an old acquaintance.

"Who was that?"

"Why, that little bay horse that I rode after the brumbies that time. The one you called White-when-he's-wanted"

"The deuce you did! Are you sure? Who had him?"

"Sure! I'd swear to him anywhere. A little drover-fellow had him. A little fellow, with a big scar across his forehead. Came from Monaro way, somewhere. He said he bought the horse from you for fifteen notes."

And then there was a chorus about the thief getting seven years.

But he has n't so far, and, as the Queen's warrant does n't run much out west of Boulia, it is not at all likely that any of us will ever see the drover again, or will ever again cross the back of "White-when-he's-wanted."

A. B. PATERSON.



THE TRAMP.

SHE laid the stick and her baby on the grass while she untied the rope that tethered the calf. The length of the rope separated them. The cow was near the calf, and both were lying down. Every day she found a fresh place to tether it—since tether it she must, for there was no one to go after it but herself. She had plenty of time, but then there was baby; and if the cow turned on her out on the plains, and she with baby—— She was afraid of the cow; she had been a town girl, only she did not want the cow to know it. She used to run at first when the cow bellowed its protest against the penning-up of its calf. This suited the cow, also the calf, but the woman's husband was wroth, and called her—the noun was cur. It was he who forced her to run and meet the advancing cow, brandishing a stick and uttering threatening words till the enemy turned tail and ran. "That's the way!" the man said, laughing at her white face. In many things he was worse than the cow, and she wondered if the same rule would apply to the man, but she was not one to provoke skirmishes, even with the cow.

It was early for the calf to go "to bed"—nearly an hour earlier than usual; but she felt so weirdly lonely. Partly because it was Monday, and her husband had been home for Saturday night and Sunday. He had gone off before daylight this morning; he was a shearer, and fifteen miles as the crow flies separated them. She knew of no one nearer, unless the tramp. Ah! that was why she had penned the calf up so early. She feared more from the look of his eyes, and the gleam of his teeth, as he watched her newly-awakened baby beat its impatient fists upon her covered breasts, than from the knife that was sheathed in the belt at his waist.

Her husband, she had told him, was sick. She always said that when she was alone and a tramp came—and she had gone in from the kitchen to the bedroom and asked questions and replied to them in the best man's voice she could assume. But this tramp had walked round and round the house, and there were cracks in some places,—and after the last time he had asked for tobacco. She had none to give, and he had grinned, because there was a broken clay pipe near the wood-heap where he stood, and if there were a man inside there ought to have been tobacco. Then he asked for money, but women in the bush never have money.

At last he was gone, and she, watching through the cracks inside, saw him when about a quarter of a mile away turn and look back at the house. Then he went further in the direction that she would have him go; but he paused again, turned and looked behind him, and, apparently satisfied, moved to the left towards the creek. The creek made a bow round the house, and when he came to it she lost sight of him. Hours after, watching intently in that direction for signs of smoke, she saw the man's dog chasing some sheep that had gone to the creek for water, and saw it slink back suddenly, as if the man had called it.

More than once she thought of taking her baby and going to her husband, but as yet she had not set her will against his as with the cow, and so dared not. Long before nightfall she placed food in the kitchen, and a big brooch that had been her mother's she put upon the table, because, if the man did come back and robbery were his object, it was the only thing valuable that she had. And she left the kitchen door open—wide open; but this was not wise.

How she fastened the doors inside! Beside the bolt in the back one she drove in the steel and the scissors; against it she piled the stools and the table. Beside the lock on the front door she forced the handle of the spade, under the middle bar, and the blade between the cracks in the flooring boards. Then the prop-stick, cut into lengths, held the top as the spade held the middle. The windows were little more than port-holes; she had nothing to fear through them.

She ate a few mouthfuls of food and drank a cup of cold milk, for she lighted no fire, and when night came no candle, but crept with her baby to bed.

What woke her? The wonder was that she had slept: she had not meant to, but she was young, very young. Perhaps the shrinking of the galvanised roof—yet hardly, that was too usual. Something had set her heart beating wildly, and the very air she breathed seemed fraught with terrible danger, but she lay quite still—only she put her other arm over her baby. Then she had both round it, and she prayed: “Little baby—little baby—don’t wake!”

She saw one of the open cracks, quite close to where she lay, darken with a shadow—for the moon’s rays shone on that side. Then a protesting growl reached her; and she could fancy she heard the man turn hastily: she plainly heard the thud of something striking the dog’s ribs, and the long, flying strides of the animal as it howled and ran. Still watching, she saw the shadow darken every crack along the wall: she knew by the sounds that the man was trying every position that might help him to see in; but how much he saw she could not tell. She thought of doing many things that might deceive him into the idea that she was not alone, but the sound of her voice would wake baby, and, as though that were the only danger that threatened her, she dreaded it. If baby cried she felt as if she, in turn, must betray her weakness, and instinctively cry to her protector, fifteen miles away. So she prayed: “Little baby, don’t wake! don’t cry!”

Very stealthily the man crept about. She knew he had his boots off, because of the vibration that his feet caused as he walked along the verandah, gauging the width of the little window in her room and the resistance of the front door. Then he went to the other end, and the uncertainty of what he might be doing was fearful: she had felt safer, far safer, while he was close, and she could watch and listen. But now! Oh, God! it was terrible. She felt she must watch, and again the great fear of wakening baby assailed her. And there was another thing: on that side of the house one

of the slabs had shrunk in length as well as in width, and had once fallen out. It was held in position only by a wedge of wood underneath. What if he should discover that! The uncertainty increased her terror. She felt she must rise: and now, how she prayed as she gently raised herself with her little one in her arms, held tightly to her breast!

The vital parts in her child's body she tried to shield with her hands and arms as she thought of the knife: even its little feet she covered with its white gown, and baby never murmured—it liked to be held so. Noiselessly she crossed to the other side, and stood where she could see and hear, but not be seen. He was trying every slab, and was very near to that with the wedge under it. Then, even while hoping, she saw him find it; and heard the sound of the knife as bit by bit he began to cut away the wooden barrier.

She waited still, with her baby pressed tightly to her; though she knew that in another few minutes this man with the cruel eyes, lascivious mouth and gleaming knife would be able to enter. One side of the slab tilted; there was nothing to do now but cut away the remaining little end, when the slab, unless he held it, would fall inside or out; and then——

She heard his jerked breathing as it kept time with the cuts of the knife, and heard the brush of his clothes as they rubbed the walls with his movements, for she was so still and quiet that she did not even tremble. And she knew when he ceased, and wondered why. She stood well concealed; she knew he could not see her and that he would not fear if he did; yet she heard him move cautiously away. Perhaps he expected the slab to fall. Still, his motive puzzled her: his retreat was a pretence, she felt sure; and she moved even closer and bent her body the better to listen. Ah! what sound was that? "Listen! Listen!" she bade her heart—her heart that had kept so still hitherto, but now bounded with tumultuous throbs that dulled her ears. Nearer and nearer came the sounds, till the welcome thud of horse's hoofs rang out clearly.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" she cried; for they were very close before she could make sure, and then there was the door

so locked and barred with many bars. The age it took to tear away its fastenings !

Out she darted at last, and, tearing madly along, saw the horseman far beyond her in the distance. She called to him in Christ's name, in her babe's name, still flying like the wind with the speed that deadly peril sends ; but the distance grew greater and greater between them, and when she reached the creek her prayers turned to wild shrieks, for there crouched the man she feared, with outstretched hands that had caught her ere she saw him. She knew he was offering terms if she ceased to struggle and cry for help, though louder and louder did she cry for it ; but it was only when the man's hand gripped her throat that the cry of " Murder ! " came from her lips ; and when she fell the startled curlews took up the awful sound, and flew over the horseman's head shrieking " M-u-r-d-e-r ! M-u-r-d-e-r ! M-u-r-d-e-r ! "

" By God ! " said the boundary-rider, " it's been a dingo right enough. Eight killed up here, and there's more down in the creek—a ewe and lamb, I'll bet ; and the lamb's alive." And he shut out the sky with his hand and watched the crows that were circling round and round, nearing the earth one moment and the next shooting skyward. By that he knew the lamb must be alive. Even a dingo will spare a lamb sometimes.

Yes, the lamb was alive, and after the manner of lambs of its age did not know its mother when the light came. It had sucked the still-warm breasts and laid its little head on her bosom and slept till morn ; then, when the wee one looked at the swollen, disfigured face with the starting eyes, and clenched teeth that had bitten through the tongue and stained the bodice crimson, it wept and would have crept away but for the hand that still clutched its little gown. Sleep was nodding its golden head and swaying its small body, and the crows were close, so close, to the other's wide-open eyes, when the boundary-rider galloped down. He reeled in his saddle when he saw the two, and, covering his eyes, cried, " Jesus Christ ! " And he told afterwards how the little child held

out its arms to him, and how he was forced to cut the portion of its gown that the dead hand held.

A few miles further down the creek a man kept throwing an old cap into the water. The dog would bring it out and lay it on the opposite side from where the man stood, but would not allow the man to catch him, though it was only to wash the blood of the sheep from his mouth and throat, for the sight of blood made the man tremble.

But the dog also was guilty.

BARBARA BAYNTON.



THE MAN WHO SAW A MOA.

IT had rained steadily for three days, and all hands were gathered round the cook-house fire—the only decently-dry place in camp.

Dead sick we were of loafing and playing euchre for matches. Talk turned upon a recent discovery of moa-bones down south, and, of course, old Dick took the lead. There was n't a mortal thing on earth that he did n't know something about. He had been sailor, miner, soldier, bushman, and the Lord knows what else; and, though he was past sixty, he could handle a hook or a flail with the best of us.

"Yes, mates, it can't have been very long since the last moa turned up its toes. In fact, I could spin a yarn 'bout that very same bird, only I don't care to be thought a liar by any man."

"Let her go, Gallagher! let her go!" was the chorus all round.

"We'd believe you, Dick," added a Taranaki man, "if you told us you had shorn Esau, the hairy man, and sold his fleece to St. Peter for a door-mat."

—"Came out here," went on Dick without more ado, "in the early days, when the West Coast was just beginning to boom. Self and mate cleared out from the barque we were on at Lyttleton, and made 'cross country to the Coast. We had a pretty rough time at first, and went back past all the other diggers, after a bit, and camped in the bottom of a big gorge. Here we made very fair money, even for those days, although we were pretty lonesome all by ourselves. First night or two we got devilish well scared. Just about dark there would come a wild, wailin' sort o' noise, something like a steam-siren in a fog. But, as nothin' happened, we soon got used to that; in fact, we used it as a kind o' tea-bell.

"However, one day we was workin' on a bit of terrace at the

bottom of the gorge, when a boulder, the size of a man's head, came out of the bush above us as if it had been fired from a cannon ; then came two or three more, and then a six-foot log, and we reckoned it was n't healthy where little things like that were flyin' round, so we knocked off and went up to see what the trouble was. We climbed up to a little terrace 'bout fifty yards above us, and there was the chap that had done it !—a thunderin' big bird, 'bout twice the size of an ostrich. He was scratching for dear life, just like a rooster, an' every now an' again he would pick up a worm or a grub. 'Poor beggar !' says Jack ; 'if he has to load-up with that sort o' tack he'll be a long time gettin' his full cargo on board.'

"We looked at him and he looked at us, and just went on scratching again ; so we concluded to let well alone.

"After that we often used to meet the beggar stalking about the river-bed or in the bush ; in fact, he seemed to like to see us. S'pose he felt a bit lonely with none of his mates about. What was he like ? Well, not unlike one of them wood-hens you see running about, only about a thousand times as big. He had little bits of wings, an' a funny little tail that he stuck up in a comical way, every step he took. Run !—by the hokey, he could run ! Saw him chasing a Maori-rat one day, and the rat had n't a show. Our friend just put down his head and went through the scrub and supple-jacks like greased lightnin'.

"At last one night the beggar paid us a visit in camp, just as we were sitting down to tea. S'pose the grubs and worms had been a bit scarce that day, for he seemed pretty sharp set. Jack threw him half a roast pigeon ; he swallowed it like a pea, and then the fun began. He walked right up to the tent-door, and began to tackle the rest of the grub. Jack up and hit him with a pick-handle, but the bloomin' dicky-bird just planted his foot in Jack's chest, and Jack sat down mighty quick. Then I chimed in with a tomahawk, but he just let me have one-two in such short order that I thought I might as well have a spell, too. He was a good doer, and no mistake ! Scoffed our pigeons whole, choked over the damper, swallowed a knife, an' then he put his beak in the hot tea.

Pulls it back pretty sudden, you bet! but when Jack gives a chuckle and raises his head a bit where he is lyin', the old fowl just steps over to him and dances all the grinnin' out of him in two jiffs. Back he goes, then, and starts to turn out the whole bloomin' caboose. Finding the tent a bit awkward for a bird of his size, he just kicks it to Jericho an' starts scratchin' like a steam-engine. My word! the way those things did fly! He found my watch and swallowed it, leavin' the chain hangin' out of his beak. Then he got on to some tinned stuff, an' down went the two-pound tins like pills. But drink was his ruin—like many another's!

"We had some rum in the bottom of a long tin-can, and when he shoved his beak into this I suppose he found it pretty good; at all events he was n't in a hurry to take his beak out again. When he did try to get out, the handle of the tin stuck round his neck, and there he was blindfolded. Things began to fly worse than ever then; he went dancing round into the fire and up again' the trees till he found it would n't come off that way, so he quietened down—put the tin on the ground, and started working it off gradually. This was our chance! I ups with the tomahawk and takes the can fairly off for him; of course it was n't my fault that his head came with it!

"Well, boys, we lived on that bird for nearly a month; he was something like turkey, with a dash of shag. Yes; we got the tinned-meat and the watch out all right; likewise about fifty quid worth of rough gold that the beggar had stowed away. Why didn't we take the carcass into town? Because we were new-chums, my lad, an' did n't know but moas was as common as cock-a-doodles."

WEKA.

FROM THE LOG OF THE OUTWARD BOUND.

THE look-out had sighted some wreckage on the lee-quarter ; the mate, aloft, had made out a ship's mast in the centre of the circular vista his binocular gave him ; and the steamer's head fell off three points to leeward so as to pass closer. The stale novels and quoits, the staler flirtations, were dropped, and all the passengers crowded to the side ; except the half-dozen men in the smoking-room, who still kept to their eternal poker. The rest waited, glancing alternately from the sea to the cross-trees, and looking where pointed the black barrels of the mate's glasses.

"There's a man lashed to it !"

The cry from aloft sent a thrill of excitement all through the steamer. Down to the sick people, who tried to come on deck, or at least rolled over in their bunks to open their dead-lights ; down to the engineers, reaching with oil-cans between flying piston-rods ; down past the grimy, sweating devils in the stokehole, till it got into the coal, mingled with the steam, and flew through the pipes and valves like spirit through the veins of a man. But the poker-players remained calm.

"Tell us when we come up," said one who held four aces.

"Raise you five pounds !"

The smoke tumbled from the funnels with a hoarse roar ; the minutes seemed as many as the countless waves that one by one dashed against the bow, and fell by, broken and shattered, into the hissing wake. Then the spar was sighted from the deck ; bit by bit the details became plainer,—the top, the dishevelled rigging, and something else—a mere spot—which gradually grew into the bare breast of a man, in blue trousers, lashed with many coils to the mast.

Steam was stopped and a boat lowered. There was no sign of life from the castaway ; he hung forward limply on his lashings, and he seemed fearfully wasted. Coming closer, a slight movement of his head was seen, but it was only the rocking of the sea, and it added to his helpless, dead appearance. Rough hands grew womanly as they cut him loose and laid him in the stern. Then the boat shot back to the steamer, whose black sides were spotted with little white specks along the bulwarks and at every cabin-window.

"Living—just !" said the doctor, from the sheets, as the boat touched the side. There was a cheer, in which even the poker-players joined, with their hands in their pockets clutching the last deal.

Then the fearfully light armful was lifted on board, and left to the doctor forward ; the steamer was put on her course ; and the forlorn spar, with its tangle of rigging, was soon bobbing away in the white wake that she trailed behind her half-way round the world.

The passengers would have liked the man to relate his adventures, but no one had seen him except the doctor, whose bulletin said that he was very weak, hardly sensible, and an almost hopeless case. On the evening of the third day, when the subject—considered as a topic for the saloon—had so waned in interest that bets were no longer made as to the patient's living or not, the doctor came to the captain.

"He's sensible now, and he wants to see you—to make a statement, he says."

"Is he —— ?"

"Umph—yes ! I'm afraid so."

They went forward to the sick bay, where the lamps, switched low, showed a man lying back, with sunken temples, and cheeks gaunt and hollow under the new beard that half-covered them. He turned a glance, glittering with death, upon the comers, and spoke in a struggling whisper.

"Skipper, my clearance is made out. I want my wife to know at once that I am dead—you're a liner, ain't you—that's good ! the

news'll be quicker. I don't want no 'missin' at Lloyd's,' and waitin' and waitin' month arter month for me to turn up. 'Tain't good for a woman, 'specially when—oh! it's mighty hard, skipper!—we was only just married, but it's better she knows at once—the oncertainty 'd kill her, and she'll be able to bear it better now than—than if it come on her by-and-by. Tell her immediate, skipper; and tell the owners that the Laura May has foundered, so Jenny can get my wages; she'll want it, poor girl."

The captain assured him, and he went on:

"My name's Trigg—Benjamin Trigg, A.B., of the Laura May, barquentine, of Liverpool, homeward bound from Port Royal with logwood—fifteen souls, all told—all gone but me! . . . God Almighty! there they are again! Keep 'em off! Keep 'em off!"

It was only a cockroach that had dropped on the blanket, but he had risen on one elbow with the miraculous strength of delirium, and his whole frame trembled with horror.

"Not like that! Oh, God! don't kill me like poor Joe! No, no, God!"

He seemed to sweep something off his face, and fell back suddenly in collapse. The doctor flicked the insect away.

"Gone?" asked the captain.

"Yes."

"Poor devil! What did he mean? Sounded like the horrors, did n't it?"

"No, it can't be that—it's very peculiar—the sun has got at his brain."

"You're—right—doctor—it ain't." The man's eyes were still closed, but his lips parted in an almost inaudible whisper.

"Alive!" started the two listeners.

"Ay—I'm alive—summat, and it ain't the 'orrors. They ain't so bad as hanging over that deck hearin' Joe and watchin' them crawlin' things. You'll keep 'em off me, won't yer, doctor—you won't let me die like my poor messmate? . . . Gimme something and I'll tell ye about it."

The doctor, still perplexed, leant over the castaway, quietly

parting down the clasped, beseeching hands, and holding the brandy to the blackened lips.

"Thank ye—that's better—I'll get along—'s nearly high water. It happened tenth day out. We'd been becalmed three days, and it was the rollin' about in the blazin' sun with the sea lukewarm that did it. There was millions and millions of eggs in that blasted stuff, and the sun hatched 'em. . . . Skipper, what's your cargo?"

"General merchandise."

"Any logwood?"

"No."

"That's right. Steer clear of it. 'Cos when you're becalmed the sun hatches them things—never open the hatches when you're becalmed"—

"This is a steamer, my man," said the captain.

"I know—can't I hear yer engines—they're sayin' I'm dead, so Jenny'll get my wages. *I'm-dead-that-I-am-that-I-am-that-I-am*—listen, skipper!—*I'm dead*—they speak quite plain—*that-I-am-that-I-am-that*—"

"Lord, old girl, who'd 'a' thought you'd 'a' made so much out o' washin' shirts—Mrs. Trigg, Laundress—I painted the same sort of curly L on the bows of the *Laura May*—don't pipe yer eye, I'm home now, and I'll never sail on a logwood ship no more. Tighter, lass! Lord, it's real lummy 'avin' yer arms round me. Wha-at! God's mercy! yer don't say so? Bless yer, lass—and him or her, whatever it is! Mind, if it's a boy he's to be called Joe. Don't say nothin'—I'm too damned happy. . . . *Laura May*, sir, homeward bound. . . . Ay, ay, sir. . . . What the hell does the mate want, swabbin' an' polishin'—'tain't a bloomin' yacht"—

He went off into disconnected scraps of sentences, each in a different voice, and then into inarticulate mutterings. Even when he was silent the diseased activity of his brain was shown by the voiceless thought that ran in rapid changes of expression over his face. The two men tried hard to gather its import; then the

captain whispered to the doctor, who shook his head doubtfully and said, "I don't think it's any use."

"I do," said the captain. "I've seen it before; it'll bring him up with a round turn."

Then in his quarter-deck voice he shouted, "Ready about—stand by!" right in the sailor's ear, who at once ceased his vague muttering and answered, "Ay, ay, sir!"

"See!" whispered the captain, "look at his hands! he's unhitched the braces—all but a turn. Now we can lead him. Trigg!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What happened when the *Laura May* was on the homeward voyage?"

The man went on in a low, weakening voice that at times died away to nothing, but each time he wandered the captain brought him back by a call to duty and a question.

"The skipper thought we'd sprung a leak through strainin' of the timbers, and he ordered us to take off the 'atches. I was for'ard when I heard a scream—like a woman's—and I ran aft and saw everybody runnin' away from the 'atches, 'cos the inside of the 'old was one infernal crawlin' mass of insects—lizards, and scorpions, and centipedes, and beetles, and things I never before heard tell on, and millions and millions of ants, white and black and red, all hatched out of the logwood. And there was Joe Deeble, my mess-mate, dancin' about howlin', 'cos one o' them things had bit him. In half an eye we was racin' aloft, 'cos the pesky things was spreadin' fore and aft as if we had shipped a sea of 'em. We was real downright frightened, and all the time Joe was doublin' up of himself in the maintop, and his leg was all blue and swollen like a poisoned pup. And the insects was tumblin' out of the 'old like mad, and soon there was n't an inch clear of 'em. At first the mate tried to fight 'em with a mop on the poop, but some of the durned things could jump, and towards afternoon there was flyin' things as well, with nasty red wings, buzzin' above the deck. I was with Joe in the maintop, and the rest was scattered permiscus-like all over the riggin'. We was all fearfully thirsty; it was blazing hot, and

all the while them leggy things was knottin' and splicin' of themselves below. We was afraid they'd come aloft, but when they sniffed the bulwarks, which was bubblin' tar, they 'bouted ship back again. We saw the ants run up the railin's, and round the wheel and all over the spokes, all fightin' and scruffin'. They swarmed over the binnacle, and some long things slipped back on the eaves, and fell flat on the deck with their white bellies up, and their dozens o' legs kickin' in the air. And we heard a screech from Neil Hansen's parrot in the fo'c's'le, and we knew they'd got at it. It was as much as we could do to stop Neil from goin' down to save it. Then the skipper's fox-terrier began to sniff and yowl under the door, and the crawlers must've got him, for we heard him snappin' and howlin' and dancin' round till he, too, was quiet. We knew that the things'd never be got out of the ship, and the skipper talked of burnin' her. And there was a nasty insecty smell which was sickening; it came mostly from the caboose, which was smokin', and it was mixed up with pea-soup. The things must've fallen into the fire. And Joe was gettin' weaker and weaker, and talkin' of home, so we had to bind him to the ratlines. Now and again someone'd go aloft to the truck, but there was never nothin' in sight. Then night came on, and the first few hours afore the moon rose was awful up there in the dark with Joe dyin', and the creep, creep, creep of them things below. Every minute you'd hear somebody startin' o' slappin' hisself, as if he felt somethin' crawlin' up him. When the moon rose it was better, 'cos we could see each other, and the skipper started a song to liven us, sayin' we was in the track of steamers, and we'd sure to be sighted. All of a sudden Joe joined in the chorus, very loud, and afore a man could say 'Avast' he'd broken loose his lashin's and jumped off the top. He went singin' all the way down, till we heard him scrunch into the insects on deck. We just see'd his face for a minute, all white in the moonlight, and them cursed things closed over him, and he was only a heap of insects . . . was . . . my messmate and the parrot and the terrier "——

"Now, it's real downright ridiculous, Jenny, goin' on like this ;

your 'usband did n't die like poor Joe, he did n't, marm. He had a berth in a liner, and a liner's doctor, and he was buried decently with a shot at his heels, and he told me to tell you, Mrs. Trigg, that he was very sick when Joe fell, and, says he, get my wages, Jenny dear, and call the baby Ben. Don't call him Joe, 'cos Joe fell among the insects, and next mornin' all the crew was lashed aloft, 'cos they was frightened, too, and Trigg, marm, your poor 'usband, what died on the liner, he looked on deck and he see'd a skeleton hand—picked clean——

“Will yer remember it all, skipper? Write it down—Joe fell, and there was a squall, I think. I remember hearin' 'im sing, and lashin' myself to the mast, and the creepy sound came up through the timber, an'——

“Hallo, where's the moon?—it's all cloudy, there's wind coming—in with the topsails—ay, ay, sir—if we ship a sea with the 'atches off we'll founder—what's that! God! here it comes broadside on—hold tight——”

“Yer 'and, skipper; I'm castin' off. Thanks for pickin' me up—you went out of yer way—t' other line'll beat yer this trip. 'Tain't every skipper would 've. I've sailed on liners—all hell for the passage and damn those overboard! Good-bye, doctor, and thank you kindly. And, skipper, tell—Jenny—she's not to keep single 'cos o' me—there's lots'll 'ave her”——

“My name's Trigg, sir. . . . I want to make statement . . . Liverpool”——

He had passed outward.

J. H. GREENE.

ON OUR SELECTION.

THE baby, twelve months old, was to be christened, and Mother decided to give a party. She had been thinking about the party for some time; but decision was contemporaneous with the arrival of a certain mysterious parcel, when we were told to prepare for the party in earnest.

Dad and Dave were drawing water. Joe was raking husks and corn-cobs into a heap at the door and burning them. Little Bill was collecting the pumpkins and pie-melons strewn about the yard. Mother and Sal were engaged outside. Mother stood on a box; Sal spread newspapers on the table and smeared them over with paste, then handed them cautiously to mother, who fixed them on the wall. The baby crawled upon the floor.

"Not that way," said mother; "that's upside-down; give them to me straight, 'cause your father sometimes likes to read them when they're up."

They chatted about the christening.

"Indeed, then, she won't be asked," Sal said; "not if she goes down on her knees—th' skinny little——"

"Min', min', *mind*, girl!" Mother screeched; and Sal dropped the newspaper she was about to hand up, and jumping a stool caught the baby by the skirt-tail just as it was about to wobble into the fire.

"My goodness! you little *rat*!" The baby laughed playfully, and struggled to get out of her arms. Sal placed it at the opposite side of the room, and the decorating continued.

"I can remember the time, then," Mother said, "when they had n't so much to be flash about; when the old woman and that eldest girl, Johanna, used to go about in their bare feet

and with dresses on—dear me!—that I wouldn't give to a black-gin!"

"Not Johanna, mother!"

"Yes, *Johanna*; you wouldn't remember it, of course; Norah was the baby then."

"You little wretch!" and Sal rushed for the baby and pulled it from the fire once more. She dumped it down in a different corner, and returned to the paste. The baby made eagerly for the fire again, but when half-way across the room it stopped, rested its cheek on the floor and fell asleep—and it on the verge of being christened "*Bartholomew*!"—until Dad came in and took it up.

Mother went into her bedroom and came out with a flaring red sash flying over her greasy gown, and asked Dad if he liked it.

Dad looked at the ribbon, then out of the window and chuckled.

"What d'y' think of me?"

"*Think* of y'?"—and Dad grinned.

Mother looked fondly at the ribbon. She was very satisfied with herself. She was a true woman. She tripped into the room again and came out with some yards of print, and asked Dad what he thought of *that*. Mother was fond of dress.

"Dear me, woman!" Dad said; "what's going to happen?"

"But how do y' like it?"—letting it hang like a skirt.

Dad grinned more.

"Is it a nice pattern?"

Dad still grinned.

"Does it *suit* me?"

Dad looked out the window and saw Joe knock little Bill down with a pumpkin. He ran out.

"Men have n't a bit of taste," Mother said to Sal, folding the print, "except just for what" (Joe rushed in at the front door and out the back one)—"cept for what's to go in their stomachs. All they think about's an old"—(Dad rushed in at the front door and out the back one)—"old horse or something; and then they think"—(Joe rushed in again at the front door, but dived under the sofa)—"think every old screw is a race-horse"—(Dad rushed in

again at the front door and out at the back one)—“my word! if he finds you there, me shaver, you ’ll catch it!”

Joe breathed hard.

Mother put the print away and mounted the box again. Then Mrs. Flannigan—a glib-tongued old gossip, the mother of sixteen shy selector children—dropped in, and they drank tea together and talked about christening and “matches” and marriages and babies and bad times and bad husbands until dark—until Mrs. Flannigan thought her husband would be wanting his supper, and went home.

Joe talked of the christening at school. For a time nobody paid any attention to him; but as days passed, and one and another went home to find that mother and father and bigger brothers and sisters had been “asked,” the interest grew, and a revulsion of feeling in favour of Joe set in. First, Nell Anderson suddenly evinced a desire for his society—till then she would weep if made stand next him in class; then the Murphys and the Browns and young Roberts surrounded him, and Reuben Burton put his string bridle on him, and would n’t ride any other horse in a race; and at last Joe became the idol of the institution. They all fawned on him and followed him about—all but the two Caseys. They were isolated, and seemed to feel their position keenly.

Joe was besieged with questions, and he answered them with a head-shake and a sniffing of one nostril. He disclosed all the arrangements, and gave melting descriptions of the pies and puddings Mother was preparing. How they danced around him and called him “Joseph”! The two Caseys stood off in silence, and in fancy saw those pies and puddings. A pleasant contemplation till Nell Anderson pointed to them, and asked Joe if they were invited.

“Nah,” Joe said; “n-n-none of ’em is.”

“Ain’t their mother?”

“N-nah, we d-don’t want ’em,”—and he snuffed more. The two Caseys stole away to the rear of the school, where they sat and nursed their chagrin in lugubrious silence, and caught flies mechanically, and looked down at their bare feet over which the

ants crawled, until the teacher thumped the end of the little building with a huge paling, and school went in.

The day came, and we all rose early and got ready. The parson, who had to ride twenty-five miles to be present, arrived near mid-day. His clothes were dusty, and he looked tired. Mother and Sal wondered if they should offer him something to eat, or let him wait until the guests arrived and all sat to the big spread. They called Dad and Dave into the little tumble-down kitchen to discuss the matter. Dad said he did n't care what they did ; but Dave settled it. He said : " Get th' chap a feed."

Joe sat on the sofa beside the parson's tall hat and eyed it in wonder. Joe had never seen so much Respectability before. The parson ate with his back turned to Joe, while Mother and Sal flew busily about. Joe cautiously put out his hand to feel the beaver. Mother saw him and frowned. Joe withdrew his hand and stared at the rafters.

" Delicious tea!" said the parson, and Mother served him with more.

Joe's hand stole out to the hat again. Dave, standing outside near the front door, noticed him and grinned. That emboldened Joe, and he lifted the hat and placed his head inside it, and grinned out at Dave. Mother frowned more, but Joe could n't see her. She hurried out. Then from the back of the house Dad's voice thundered "*Joe!*" Joe removed the beaver and obeyed the call. Harsh, angry whispers came from the door, then sounds of a scuffle, and an empty bucket flew after Joe as he raced across the yard towards the haystack.

Soon the guests began to arrive. The Maloneys and the Todds and the Taits and the Thompsons and others, with children and dogs, came in spring-carts and drays from Back Creek ; the Watsons and the Whites and old Holmes and Judy Jubb, from Prosperity Peak, appeared on horseback. Judy, in the middle of the yard, stepped out of a torn and tattered old riding-habit, with traces of the cow-yard about it, and displayed a pair of big boots and

"railway" stockings, and a nice white muslin dress with red bows and geraniums and a lot of frills and things on it. Judy was very genteel. The Sylvesters—nice people that came from Brisbane with new ideas and settled near us; people who could n't leg-ropo a cow; who were going to make a big thing out of fowls; who were for ever asking Dad if jew-lizards were snakes—came on foot with their baby in a little painted cart. A large black dog, well-groomed and in new harness, without reins, pulled the cart along. We had never seen a dog pulling a cart before—neither had our dog. He rushed off to meet the Sylvesters, but stopped half-way and curled his tail over his back, and growled, and threw earth about with his legs. Sylvesters' dog stood also, and curled *his* tail over his back. Mrs. Sylvester patted him and said, "*Carlo—Carlo!* you naughty boy!" Our dog suddenly made off. Sylvesters' dog pursued him. He tore along the fence at coursing speed, making a great noise with the cart until he turned a corner, where the cart upset and left the baby. But he didn't catch our dog. And Paddy Maloney and Steve Burton and young Wilkie galloped up through the paddock, shouting and whipping their horses, and carried away the clothes-line stretched between two trees at the back.

The house soon filled—there was just room for big Mrs. M'Doolan to squeeze in. She came on foot, puffing and blowing, and drank the glass of christening water that stood on the table with bull-frogs careering round in it. She shook hands with everybody she knew, and with everybody she did n't know, and kissed the baby. There was no pride about big Mrs. M'Doolan.

The ceremony was about to commence. Joe and the young Todds and the young Taits, who, with the tomahawk and some dogs—about twenty-six dogs—had been up the paddock hunting kangaroo-rats, returned with a live jew-lizard. They squatted round the door guarding the trophy.

Dad and Mother, with the baby in a dress of rebellious hues, stood up and faced the parson. All became silent and expectant. The parson whispered something to mother, and she placed the baby in Dad's great arms. The band of hunters at the door giggled, and

the jew-lizard tried to escape. Dad, his hair and beard grown very long, stared at the parson with a look of wild, weird reverence about him.

"In the name of the Father," the parson drawled, dipping his fingers into the water and letting it drip on to the baby's face, "I baptise thee, Barthol——"

Interruption.

The jew-lizard escaped, and with open mouth and head up raced across the floor. Had it been a boa-constrictor or a bunyip the women could n't have squealed with more enthusiasm. It made straight for Judy Jubb. But Judy had been chased by a jew-lizard before. She drew back her skirts—also her leg—and kicked the vermin in the chest and lifted it to the rafters. It fell behind the sofa and settled on Todd's bull-dog that was planted there. Bully seized it and shook it vigorously and threw it against Mrs. M'Doolan, and seized it again and shook it more—shook it until our dog and a pack of others rushed in. "T' th' devil!" said Dad, indignantly, aiming heavy kicks at the brutes. "The *child*—gimme th' child!" Mother shrieked, pulling at Dad. "Out w' y'!" said Anderson, letting fly his foot. "Down, Bully!" shouted Todd, and between them all they kicked the dogs right through the door, then heaved the lizard after them.

But the ceremony was soon over, and everybody was radiant with joy—everybody but Bartholomew. *He* had been asleep until the parson dropped the water on his face, when he woke suddenly. He glared at the strange assemblage a moment, then whined and cried hard. Mother "hooshed" him, and danced him up and down saying, "Did they *fri*-ten 'm?" Mrs. M'Doolan took him and "hooshed" him and jumped him about and said: "*There* now—*there* now!" But Bartholomew resented it all, and squealed till it seemed some part of him must burst. Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Anderson and Judy Jubb each had a go at him. "Must have the wind," murmured Mrs. Ryan, feelingly, and Mrs. Johnson agreed with her by nodding her head. Mother took him again and showed him the dog, but he did n't care for dogs. Then Sal ran out with him and

put him on "the gee-gee"—Dad's old moke that stood buried in thought at the fence—and he was quiet.

A long table erected in the barn was laden with provisions, and Dad invited the company to "come along and make a start." They crowded in and stared about. Green boughs and corn-cobs hung on the walls; some bags of shelled corn stood in one corner; and from a beam dangled a set of useless old cart-harness that Dad used to lend to anyone wanting to borrow. Dad and Paddy Maloney took up the carving. Dad stood at one end of the table—Paddy at the other. Both brandished long knives. Dad proceeded silently—Paddy with joyous volubility. "Fowl or pig?" he shouted to them, and rattled the knife, and piled the provender on their plates, and told them to "back in their carts" when they wanted more; and he called the minister "boss." Paddy was in his element.

'T was a magnificent feast, though, and went off most successfully. It went off until only the ruins remained. Then the party returned to the house and danced. Through the afternoon, and far into the night, the concertina screeched its cracked refrain, while the forms of weary females, with muffled infants in arms, hovered about the drays in the yard, and dog-tired men, soaked to the knees with dew-wet grass, bailing and blocking horses in a paddock corner, took strange, shadowy shape,—until, when all was bright and the sun seemed near, the last dray rolled heavily away from the christening of Bartholomew.

ARTHUR H. DAVIS.



A BOX OF DEAD ROSES.

THE old lady was a most amusing creature, and she had a past which was a record amongst pasts. Only that she was rich enough to buy the whole district, its "society" would have "cut" her long ago; as it was, people only talked about her with meaning looks and whispered condemnation. At least, the generation to which she belonged did that; the younger one only looked and wondered. Bent with rheumatism, bushy-browed, fierce-eyed and hard-featured—there remained no trace of the beauty and charm which (so report said) had sent more than one good man to the devil.

On sunny days she would have her chair moved on to the wide, vine-sheltered verandah. She liked to see what was going on; and she said that in Australia most things happened on verandahs. This particular one had been planned and built in early pioneering days, and had, no doubt, seen many ups and downs of varied incident.

One could listen to her by the hour when she was in the vein for remembering pages from her own life or from other lawless lives of early days, when all country west of the station was unknown Australia. Like most old people, she was given to repetition, but she told me a story once which neither I nor anyone else could ever induce her to tell again.

It was about a young wife—the most innocent of brides, who thought the world of her husband, and had no wish or look for other men. Yet the house was full of other men in those days, and they all gave thoughts or looks, more or less, to the prettiest woman in the district. Every evening she used to stand at her bedroom door, looking along the verandah, until she saw her husband

returning from his work ; and every evening he brought her a rose from the big bush by the steps. That was during the first months of her marriage. Next year, the rose-bush bore as abundantly as ever, but the man often forgot to pick a flower for her ; and, after a time, he forgot altogether.

The young wife was painfully ideal and long-suffering, and never gave him a word of reproach ; she was still so much in love with him that she was shy, and blushed like a girl when he came near her unexpectedly. "Fancy : after two years of married life !" And the old lady smiled wickedly, and continued :

"She was tired one night, and went to bed early, leaving her husband smoking and reading in the dining-room ; but it was so hot that she presently got up, threw on a gown, and strolled along the verandah in the shadow for a breath of cool air. The sultriness of the air brought out the strongest scent of the moonflowers. Just there, at the corner near the rose-bush, she saw her husband with his arms round a woman, kissing her lips over and over again—they were full, very red lips, such as men like to kiss.

"The woman was one of the housemaids—the soft-voiced, self-contained, velvet-footed one who usually brought in the tray for supper, and whose eyes never left the floor as she did so—a girl who seemed to have no thought beyond her duties.

"The wife heard enough to show her that the woman had thoughts for many things besides—enough to tell her that those kisses were not the first by any means ; that the man's life had been a long lie, except, perhaps, during the very early days of marriage. She liked to think that he was all hers then. A delusion also, possibly ; but a harmless one.

"As it was, she stole off to bed without saying a word. I call that a 'verandah tragedy,' my dear ; because her whole nature changed in a few moments. Not that there was much to notice one way or the other at first—except that she said she could not bear the scent of the moonflowers, and had the creeper taken up at the roots. She did not even send away the housemaid. Why should she ? But things were a great deal more pleasant for the 'other

men' afterwards—a great deal, my dear! She used to sing and play to them, and dance with them, and flirt with them, and fill the house with visitors, and so on—in fact, she was a beauty, and had only just awakened to a knowledge of her power. You see, the station and money belonged to her; so she was freer than most wives.

“There was the baby, of course—a lovely, soft-faced little thing that used to take its mid-day sleep in a string hammock, swung up there by the trellis. She was fond of the child; yet, when it died and was buried by the lagoon in the garden, she used to sit dry-eyed, looking at the hammock that swung loosely in every breeze without its accustomed burden. She even said she was not sorry; because the boy might have grown up to break some woman's heart, and the world was well rid of the breed. Perhaps it was best so; though—looking at the other side of the question—he might have lived to blush for his mother.

“One day her husband was brought in, dead—kicked by the horse he was trying to catch in the yard. They carried him straight up the verandah to the big spare-room, and the blood was dripping, dripping all the way.

“She was a tidy, methodical woman always, and she sent for the housemaid—the velvet-footed one—and bade her wash the boards. The girl had a wonderful power of self-command usually, yet, at sight of that blood, she shivered and trembled like one with the palsy. Sentimental people said the wife was perfectly inhuman to think of the state of her verandah at such a time—and, of course, a kind friend told her. She laughed as she said, ‘No! I am not heart-broken. I went through that experience two years ago.’

“Well, my dear” (and the old lady's voice sounded a little tired), “she lived a long, long life, and rather a varied and interesting one, from an outsider's point of view, at any rate. I often sit and think of her and of many things that happened on this old verandah, but of late years I forget a great deal. I like best to remember the days when the young wife used to stand listening,

listening for the husband's step—the sweetest music in the world to her.

“No doubt she was an arrant little fool and bored him to death. I think, now, that he was no worse than the majority of men: a clever, interesting woman could have managed him. She became all that afterwards—for other men; but, as I said before, she was a totally different woman. Live every inch of your life, my dear!” finished the old lady, impressively. “One life, one love!—the idea is perfectly absurd.”

Two years later I saw the old lady again—feebler, worn in body and mind. She still sat in sunny weather on the verandah, but now she always had a little cardboard box on her lap, caressing it with her withered fingers.

“Look, my dear!” she said; “this box is full of dead rose-leaves—they all came off that bush by the corner, years ago. Young people are so careless and forgetful. I may die at any moment, and unless I had it with me they would never remember to bury it in my grave. They are the dearest things I possess; the reason why they are so dear I shall carry a secret to my grave also.”

The old lady had forgotten that she had ever told me a story with roses in it.

ETHEL MILLS.



A STRIPE FOR TROOPER CASEY.

THE magpies had said good-night to the setting sun, and already darkness was moving through the dead timber.

The first notes of night-birds came from the ridges, and a curlew mourned in the reeds of a creek.

My brother Will shook his reins and rode away.

"Good-bye, Sis," he said; "I will be home pretty early."

I smiled, knowing that he reckoned without his host. Will was visiting Lizzie Lacy, and Lizzie had a sweet face. Love's pretty trickeries upset many promises, and I knew that my brother would not return till the small hours. But what was love to me—a simple country girl with a heart to lose and nobody to find it?

The cold chilled my fingers, and I shuddered. I was alone, with no one to talk to. Mother and father had gone to Bathurst that day, and evil men walked the roads, lured west by the gleam of gold. As Will disappeared in the distance, fear struck through me like a chill wave. There was a dance at Staunton's, and Mary had invited me. I was sorry now that I had refused her. Still, if Mary's heart had been as perfect as her face, she would not have said hard things of poor me. She should have schooled her tongue, although she might be a fine woman—which was trooper Casey's estimate of her. The little successes that please a woman had spoilt her, gilding her pride till it dazzled one painfully. If I had grey eyes, it was God who had coloured them; and someone has since told me that it is the pleasantest colour of all. She had said, as well, that my cheeks were red—country complexion. I blessed God for that also, because it meant health and strength. They could be pale enough at times—but pale only when hers would have been ashen.

I remembered myself and laughed. All this bitterness because

Will was visiting Lizzie Lacy, and no one was coming to kiss my hand! Silly Carrie, I said to myself, you must bide your time. You are over-young yet to harbour these thoughts. Time will surely bring you the rose, and as surely the thorn that wounds.

I had turned to enter the house when Sally whinnied from a distance, and came down the green lane between the cultivation-paddocks at a high trot, her silver tail lifted in excitement and streaming out behind her. She halted at the slip-rails and stretched her head over them, coyly inviting a caress. I gave her a cake, smoothed her velvet nose, and talked to her till the trees in the distance were very dim. Now, while I fondled, I noticed a curious inattentiveness in the mare's manner. She seemed to heed me with one ear only. The other continually flickered back and quivered as though distracted by a distant sound. Listen intently as I might, I could discover nothing. Peer as I would, I saw dead trees and naught else. But this listening and peering made me fretful and afraid; and, with a final pull at Sally's forelock—a lingering pull that told how loath I was to leave her—I turned and entered the house.

The fire burned steadily. All the little sticks that splash and splutter and noise so much were in white heaps, and only two great logs of ironbark glowed sullenly. I lit a lamp, sat down, and gazed into the fire: sweet pastime for pensive moments. At a girl's age-of-dreams, questions come in troops, and a log's red side is often rich with fancy-food. My head pillowed on an arm, I looked sideways down. The fire drowsed my eyes, and in a little while sleep shut them wholly. Remember, at that period Crime went down the roads in many guises!

I awoke with a start and looked towards the door. Two men stood in the room—a tall and a short man. They were dressed in sailor clothes, and the eyes of one squinted horribly.

"Who are you?" I said, rising to my feet and feeling strangely nervous.

"Weary men, lassie," said the tall man.

"All the way from Sydney," added the other.

"With not a bite for two blessed days," continued the first.

"And ne'er a sup," said the second.

"Indeed," I remarked, pretending sympathy with their lie ; "that is hard. But I will give you full and plenty, and when you are satisfied you must go—for," I continued, thinking to soften the words, "we do not allow any strangers to sleep here."

"Yes," said the tall man ; "feed us well, good lassie."

"And," added the other, "being satisfied, we'll leave you all alone."

Then they both chuckled, and moved to the table.

As I laid cold meat and cream and bush honey before them, a nervousness assailed me that made my hands dance.

"All alone, lassie?" said the tall man at last, throwing himself back in his chair.

"Yes," I replied, but—recognising my mistake instantly—continued : "That is, for a little while. I expect my brother every instant—he is with trooper Casey."

The short man lit his pipe, the tall one following suit. "Time to be gone, then," remarked the latter.

The other drew the stem from his lips and expelled a long white plume. "Which first?" he said.

"The gilt," said the tall man.

I heard the words, and suddenly sprang up and ran for the door. "Money first," I thought ; "what second?"

"Ah, would you!" said the short man, leaping in front.

"Let me pass!" I cried ; "someone is coming."

He did not move, but stood with folded arms, smiling coarsely.

"A sweetheart, perhaps, lassie?"

"My brother," I answered.

The tall man opened the door, put out his head, and listened. A moment after he drew in and shut the door.

"No one," he said ; "the lassie's mistaken."

"Come!" said the short man, extending his arms.

I retreated as he advanced, till at length I stood by the fire. I was all flushed with rage, and cold with fear.

“My brother is a big man,” I said; “he could kill you both with one blow.”

They laughed brutally, and the short man said, “He has a pretty sister.”

“If you are men you will not harm me. Tell me what you want, and I will give it you.”

“Take her at her word,” interrupted the tall man, coming forward.

“I will,” replied the other. “What will you give us?”

“What do you want?” I asked, brightening.

“One thing and another, lassie,” said he.

“Tobacco,” suggested his companion; “tea and sugar and flour——”

“A word in your ear, lassie!” interrupted the short man, touching me with an outstretched hand.

But I drew away, and tried to look down from my little height.

“Go out of the door, sir!—this is my father’s house!”

“Pert words from pretty lips,” said the short man. “A kiss! —a kiss!”

With that he had me in his arms, and drew me in close. I struggled, at first in silence, but at the touch of his bearded face threw back my head and filled the house with cries. He did not desist—only grew fiercer; nor did his fellow make any motion to release me. His grasp was like that of a vyce, and blue marks remained long after. Once in the struggle I saw stars, and thought a wicked dream had passed. A gust of cold wind struck my cheeks, and I strove to free myself. Then the wind blew again, and again I saw stars—the door was open and someone stood in the doorway. It was a man—tall as a giant, I thought, and the curse he thundered seemed like a great song.

The sailor released me and drew apart, laughing to lighten his guilt.

“God bless you!” I said, moving to the door—both hands on my heart, for it was panting fiercely.

Before I reached him the stranger raised a hand to make me

pause. He had a gun at his shoulder,—a long, bright barrel that gleamed fitfully.

"In the nick of time," he said calmly; "which first?"

I looked at the two sailors. They stood close together, distressed by fear. The tall man slanted sideways, like a sapling from the wind, and the short one cowered behind an upraised arm as if to ward a blow.

"Which first?" said the stranger again.

"Neither!" I replied, shuddering.

He sloped his rifle a little, looked at me cynically, and hinted something that filled me with shame.

"No, no," I cried; "do not say that! I never saw them before, and I am a good girl."

A smile crept across his lips, and his wide, dark eyes softened.

"I believe it," he said shortly.

He stepped forward and halted in the centre of the room.

"You were hungry?" he said to the short man.

The man nodded.

"And she fed you on cream and honey—the best she had?"

The man did not answer.

The gun went to the shoulder again, and the dark eyes looked along the levelled barrel.

"And you wanted to pay her in your own foul coin. Now for this," he continued, "I've a mind to put hot lead in your brain."

I ran forward with a great dread lest he should do as he threatened.

"Go away!" I cried to the sailors; "go quickly, while you are safe!"

The men turned as if to slink off, but the stranger warned them to stand very still.

"You must be punished for this night's work," he said; "and then you may go—both of you—as far as Berrima."

The two men started and eyed him keenly.

"Just so, just so," he said, nodding from one to the other; "a guilty conscience, eh?"

They scowled and sank their eyes, and he turned to me.

"Get your whip!" he said.

I stood irresolute, and he continued:

"My arm is tired holding this gun. They should have been dead long ago. Get your whip!"

I ran away, got my whip, and returned.

"Go forward and strike that man across the face."

"It would be cruel," I replied.

"Quick! or he will be dead before you reach him!"

Then I was in front of the sailor.

"Lift your arm," the stranger said.

Then he told me to strike with all my force—"As you would a wicked steer."

I obeyed with some hesitation, and struck lightly. But presently faint-heartedness forsook me. At the second lifting of the whip a sudden spirit of mastery surged my arm with fierceness, so that I dealt some savage blows. The sailor sheltered his eyes with his hands and cried aloud for mercy. Then I suddenly remembered myself and drew away, shuddering and half in tears.

"Good!" said the stranger. "And now for the other—they are mates."

"He did not offer me any hurt," I replied.

The stranger looked at him. "You are lucky," he said.

The man's face lightened with pleasure.

"But less lucky than you think, my good man," he continued.

I noticed the white fear that came into the tall man's face, and the sudden upward look of his companion.

"Come here!" said the stranger, beckoning to the short man.

The sailor approached, trembling. After a few paces had been taken, "Halt!" the stranger cried.

The man stood still on the instant.

"Squint-eyed, and with the limp of the leg-iron—dressed like a sailor!" said the stranger, in loud, clear tones. "Get some saddle straps, my girl!"

"Why?"

"Get them!" he said, shortly.

I went away, and displeasure at his brusque manner made my cheeks burn. Did it paint them also—that he spoke so gently on my return?

"I am not used to ladies, and I mean no offence," he said.

I forgave him, and said that I had felt none. "Your action to-night shows that you are a good man."

"Perhaps," he replied; "but one star does not make a heaven."

He was silent, and I forebore to ask what he meant. He motioned for the straps, and I gave them.

Then he turned to the men, and his voice hardened.

"Down on your faces!" he thundered, "quick! quick! both of you, or——"

They were down on the instant, abject as worms.

"Now take this gun, my girl," he said, "and if that man so much as wriggles, shoot him. I will manage the other."

The man was fashioned to command. I took the gun, and if the prostrate figure had moved then it would never have moved again. But the sailors were utterly cowed, and did not murmur while the stranger pinioned their hands behind them. This done, he rolled them over and looked down at them.

"What does this mean?" I said.

"A stripe for trooper Casey," he replied, and laughed.

"For trooper Casey? I do not understand?"

"You will, in time," he replied.

With that, I had to content myself. Who this man was, with the command on his lips, and the disobey-me-if-you-dare in his eyes, I did not know. I only know that he had reserves of gentleness, which spoke through his harsher moods like a bird's song in a storm.

"You, there!" he said to the short man; "do you know what they are doing at Weatherley's?"

The sailor turned his face aside, and was mute.

"Or you?" to the tall man.

"No," the man replied. "Where is Weatherley's?"

"Liars—both of you!" said the stranger. "Weatherley's, under the Range."

"What are they doing?" I interposed.

"Burying a dead woman, he replied, looking from one to the other of the prostrate men, and nodding as he changed his gaze.

"How sad!" I cried. "Poor Mrs. Weatherley! When did she die?"

"Yesterday."

"She was a strong woman."

"She met someone stronger."

"You mean Death!"

"Death, and two devils!"—he ground his teeth.

I looked at him in wonder.

"Two devils—what do you mean?"

The short man lay on his side, looking up as a beaten dog looks at his master. The stranger spurned him with a foot.

"Answer!" he said; "which of you killed her?"

"Not me," groaned the sailor; "'t was the bushrangers."

"You liar!" cried the stranger in a rising, incredulous voice, as though he doubted his own ears. "We do not——" He paused and looked at me, and saw that he had revealed himself.

"Ah!" I whispered as he turned away. I understood now, and yet he did not seem as black as people painted him.

"I tried to hide it," he said; "but it slipped out. It is a bad thing even at its best."

Then he looked very downcast, and I pitied him. An angel impulse stirred me, and I stepped forward, raised my face, and kissed him.

"Good!" he said, his fine eyes flashing, "'tis a long time since——"

He lowered his voice and continued, as if to himself: "But what does it matter? She is only a child."

"To-night has made me a woman," I replied.

"No, no! you are a child. No woman would do a thing like that. But some day you will be a woman. Then you will kiss with

the lips only, not with the heart—cheating the heart that loves you.”

It was some minutes before he spoke again.

“I saw a horse in the stockyard,” he said ; “bring him round. I want you to go somewhere.”

And when Sally was ready at the door and I in the saddle, he continued : “Ride to Staunton’s—Casey is there. Tell him”—this with a low laugh—“that the man who borrowed his horse at Weatherboard waits here to give him a stripe in exchange. Come back with him yourself.”

I turned Sally’s head to be gone immediately.

“Wait—another word ! Would you like to see me dead or trooper Casey dead ? ”

“Oh, no ; how can you ask ? ”

“I distrust women,” he returned, “since I met Judas in petticoats.”

“Try me,” I replied ; “I could not be false after what you have done.”

“When you come to the bridge, cooee ! I will be here watching these brutes, and when I hear your cry I will up and away.”

As Sally moved off some words followed from the door, where he stood in the light.

“Good-bye, little girl ! ”

“Good-bye ! and I will always remember you.”

A curlew wailed, and the stranger laughed—to make the parting easy, it seemed. Yet something that Nature had put into the curlew’s wail went through the man’s voice and saddened me for many days. It seemed that both bird and man mourned something lost.

I galloped along the track that made a siding in the green hill and slanted to the creek. Sally’s hoofs rattled on the turpentine planking of the bridge, and presently struck fire from the ironstone on the farther side. Where the track wound through wild hops I gave her free head ; for there was open country. Where the scrub crept in she slackened of her own will, not liking the rebound

of the bushes. In a little while we came to a second creek, where bullocks' heads in a white line made stepping-stones. She crossed it with a bound and a splash, and climbed the slope beyond in a few strides. Another mile brought me to Staunton's log-fence, and through the trees I saw bright windows. A little later there came to me a concertina's music and other sounds of merry-making.

I fastened Sally to the stockyard gate, and walked through the doorway. A number of couples were there, swinging round and round in a dance. As I walked into the room I felt strangely out of harmony with the surroundings, the music having put a spirit in my feet that made them seem to drag.

Mary Staunton had trooper Casey for a partner. She looked very fine and pale, but as she went by she scarcely deigned to notice me. Trooper Casey was six feet high, and had curly hair—the hair that women fancy. Every time he wheeled his metal buttons flashed. When the dance finished he was near me. I touched him on the arm.

“Mr. Casey!”

“Hallo, Carrie!” said Mary Staunton, in affected welcome; “how late you are!”

“I did n't come to dance, Mary—only to see Mr. Casey.”

“Ah, I should have known,” she answered, with a little mocking laugh, and with a glance at my dress where Sally had splashed it in crossing the creek.

I tossed my head and turned from her.

“Trooper Casey, can you spare a moment?”

“What do you want? Say what you want, here and now,” said Mary Staunton. “That is, if you're not afraid of us hearing it.”

“I intended this for you alone”—I addressed the trooper—“but now”—with a sidelong look at his sweetheart—“everyone may hear it.”

“What is it, Miss Anson?”

“Do you want a stripe?”

"Why, one'd think you were the Governor's lady," said Mary Staunton, laughing so that I blushed.

I took no notice of her, other than turning my back, and then I smiled quietly as I spoke.

"A gentleman waits at our house to pay you for a horse he borrowed at Weatherboard."

I watched him keenly to see how he took the news. On his cheeks two red spots stood out and burned. He gnawed his underlip, and there was a suppressed anger in his eyes, that glowed like covered fires. From those standing around there went up a great laugh, and Casey turned to a group who forced their merriment overlong.

"You are great laughers," said he; "but are you men enough to fight?"

None of them made a movement to accept the challenge; but, on the other hand, it was curious to see how speedily the laughter faded from their faces, giving place to something almost sad.

Then up spoke Mary Staunton.

"Carrie Anson," said she, with tremulous white lips, "if you come here to insult people, you'd better stay away."

"Don't mind her, Mary," said the trooper; "it's a trick some fool has made her play."

"Indeed it is not," I replied. "The man who gave me that message is waiting at our house with two sailors, and one of them"—I dropped my voice so that only he and Mary heard—"killed Mrs. Weatherly."

The trooper started, as though shot through; looked me in the eyes, and drew a long breath. "By God!" he cried, and moved towards the door.

"It is three to one, Mary," he said.

"Do not go!" she answered; "you may be killed."

"It is man to man, trooper!" I interrupted; "two are bound and the third keeps watch."

"Stuff!" exclaimed Mary, viciously: "*he* keep watch! You will not go alone, trooper."

"Alone! I must take the man. Where are my carbine and cap?"

"Take someone!" pleaded Mary.

"No," Casey replied, "I will do this myself. If I succeed you know what it means,"—and he looked earnestly into her eyes.

I laughed pleasantly.

"I shall be a bridesmaid—eh, Mary?"

She did not smile, but went off with a set face, swaying her skirts behind her.

"With the help of God, Miss Anson," whispered Casey, confidentially, "I shall make three prisoners to-night."

"With the help of God, you shall not, trooper Casey!" I whispered to myself.

As the trooper turned to leave the room, his carbine on his back, his sabre at his side, and his cap pressing a cushion of brown curls, I did not wonder Mary Staunton had lost her heart to him. He was a man to delight any eyes.

Some came forward and offered to assist him, but these he refused coldly. I passed out and was in the saddle before he had mounted.

Then he said, in surprise, "You must stay here, Miss Anson."

"I must go home, trooper Casey."

"There may be bloodshed."

"There must be none."

"You are very brave," he said, suspiciously; "are you sure it is no hoax?"

"Follow me, if you are not a coward!" I replied.

As I passed her, Mary Staunton muttered something about "an interfering minx." The trooper she warned to be careful. In my heart I believe that she thought his chief peril lay in me, and I laughed to think that, after all, an outlaw may not be the greatest danger in a man's path.

As the trooper rode after, his bridle jingled in the silence.

"Miss Anson," said he, "these sailors that you spoke of—was one a tall man?"

"Yes."

"And the other short?"

"With a squint."

"Just so,"—and he relapsed into silence.

The track was narrow, with no room for two horses. This prevented us from riding abreast, and gave me an excuse to keep in front. Several times Casey urged his horse forward, but I patted Sally and she kept her place. At the creek he made a bold bid to front me, but the mare flashed forward and headed him at the farther side.

"Draw aside, and let me ride in front, Miss Anson."

I answered that I knew the way quite well.

"That may be, but I have a different reason."

I was dumb, having nothing to answer.

"There may be danger ahead," he continued; "and you are foolish."

I cast about for an answer, and remembered a last week's storm.

"There is danger," I replied; "a fallen tree, and you might flounder in the branches."

He muttered something under his breath, but I did not catch the word.

In a little while we reached the fallen tree and rode round it. Beyond he spoke again.

"You can have no objection now."

"None whatever," I said, "only that a little way along a swarm of bees have fastened to a limb. You might mistake them for a wart and brush them with your shoulder. That would not be pleasant, would it?"—and I laughed to gild the prevarication. But Casey, seeing no humour in the situation, remained dumb.

Presently I cried out to him to beware of the bees, and he listed in his saddle.

"Now?" he asked.

"Not yet, trooper; we are in the bush and I prefer to stay where I am, because if you rode in front the branches would come back and sting Sally's eyes."

"Rubbish!" muttered Casey.

When we were through the bush and among the hops, he suddenly bade me halt.

"You must play no tricks, Miss Anson!"

"La! who is playing them, Mr. Casey?"

"The man at your house is a desperado."

"Is he, indeed?"—with all the innocence of the world in my voice.

"And you are an accomplice."

"Dear me, what does that mean, trooper?"

"It means that you must stay where you are."

"But I must go home."

"Then I shall arrest you."

"Arrest me, and let three grown men go free!"

"But you make it necessary," he said.

"Trooper, the desperado is a brave man, and would be as likely to kill you as you would be to kill him."

"Have no fears for me, Miss Anson."

"I have none."

"Then they are for——"

"The man who saved me?"—and I went away like an arrow. It was the first time I had come into conflict with the law, and the situation thrilled me. Casey with a great oath thundered close behind, calling on me in a low voice to hold up, and muttering dire consequences. I laughed, bent forward, and bade Sally do her best. It was necessary, since his horse had better pace and gained greatly at every stride. Now the animal's nose was at my saddle, now at Sally's shoulder, and now we raced level to the bridge.

I rose in the saddle, threw up my face, and sent a long, long "*Coo-ee! Coo-ee!*" speeding across the open.

"Hush, you hoyden!"

I tugged at the reins, throwing Sally back on her haunches, and again I cooed.

Then I sat back and listened. The trooper was now a fading

bulk in the dark. The speed of his horse on the siding was terrible, and his rein and sabre jingled fiercely.

Then, one—two—three, came the sounds of slip-rails falling. I sat back in the saddle with a sigh of deep content, and breathed as I had not for many minutes. Far and farther away I heard another horse, his hoof-thuds in the dead timber sounding like footfalls in an empty house.

"You have done good work to-night," said trooper Casey, when I entered the room a little later; "fine work for a decent, self-respecting girl."

I picked up his sleeve where the silver braid circled it.

"This looks lonely, trooper: it would be prettier if there were two of them, would it not?"

He smiled in a wintry way, and this gave me heart to say that the stranger was not so bad, after all.

Casey shook his head.

"Bad enough," he replied.

Will came in shortly after, and these words followed:

"Where did you meet him?"

"At the boundary gate," Will answered.

"What did he say?"

"Looked along his gun and ordered me to hoist my hands."

"And then?"

"Took my horse and watch—and left me his animal."

"Never mind," said the trooper quietly, "I have two prisoners. And he was not so bad, after all—eh, Miss Anson?"

"No, trooper; especially if it should happen that the horse he left is the same that he borrowed."

Casey rose to look out at the dawn.

RODERIC QUINN.

SWAMP-SWALLOWED.

ACROSS the long perspective of the mangrove flats the sun glared fierce and crimson. From the black mud-banks white, pestilential vapours rose upon the torpid air. A subtler miasm quivered over the long stretches of mephitic ooze, against the sickly green of which gleamed out the hideous reds and yellows of fantastic crabs that scuttled—as the boat came near—into pools prismatic with stagnation. Beneath the slimy surface the banded water-snakes glanced to and fro: from the reed-beds came in hungry swarms the tiger-mosquitoes; and from the mangrove-roots the sword-flies darted out in swift detachments upon the half-nude rowers—sweltering in a bath of vegetable feter.

Of the white men, one would have fired at the log-like immobility of a crocodile, basking untroubled of that “instinctive terror of man” which is but one of man’s own anthropocentric delusions. But the other said, “No!” He was a tan-faced old fellow with a wide, grim mouth and stiff, white, ape-like whiskers.

“Fire a shot here and we may as well go back! Curious acoustics, these places have. The report of a gun wanders up and down the swamps and creeks as if it was never going to stop!”

“You ’ve been here before, then?”

“Would n’t be here now if I had n’t, and if I did n’t count myself fever-proof. But as for you, Green——”

Green—young and smooth-faced, but big, brick-red, and square-jawed—cut in, “No more of me, old man! I’ll see this thing through! And, anyhow, if *I’m* not fever-proof, I’m pretty well past praying for by this time! See?”

“I see you’re good stuff, at any rate! And nothing else will do for this job. Let’s sum up—leaving out such items as heat and

insects. Fever, snakes, sunstroke, poisoned arrows from the Dyaks, treachery from these chaps of our own, and, after all—perhaps nothing at the end of it!”

“I’m game for all but the last. Heavens! Redfern, that would be a crusher.”

“Crusher?” Redfern leaned over to the young fellow. “This is it. I’m five and sixty; here’s my first chance of a pile, and I’ve staked on it whatever’s left me,—say ten or fifteen years. It’s worth it. But, you—you might have lived for seventy years, yet.”

“Confound it! man, you talk as if it was all up with me. My chance is as good as yours, at all events.”

The other man said nothing. He had private reasons for being of a different opinion.

Through pallid, steam-like mist—the visible breath of Death—the rising moon made faint light for the two men groping in the stinking mud, and shrinking, now and then, from the horrid, unnamed things their hands encountered. For half-an-hour they toiled, till to the knees and elbows they were foul with evil-smelling filth. Then Green gave up.

“This is the place, right enough,” he said—“according to your map. Triangle between three creeks; gravel bluff at one end; three mangroves in the middle. And between them we’ve searched nearly every inch. If your friend Kussoab was n’t a first-class liar, he was mad! Either way, it’s—ugh!” Something was wriggling from the mud between his feet, and, springing smartly from the spot, he slipped and fell backwards.

“It’s only a goocha!” Redfern kicked the fish-like saurian ten feet away. “What a fool you are: Hullo!—are you hurt?”

For Green lay where he had fallen—not hurt, but thinking hard. One hand, as he came down, had touched a stone, and any stone, in that absolutely rockless region, must be the stone they sought—the stone which covered the treasure he had till now but half-believed in. And with belief came greed and quick resolve. A part!—he would have all! “This old man’s day is past!—mine’s

to come! And what I mean for him, no doubt, is no more than he meant for me!"

All this in the ten seconds before Redfern helped him to his feet. "Let's get back to the boat," Green said, then, "for the present, at any rate. I feel infernally queer."

Back to the boat they picked their squeelching way, the elder man puzzled, but not yet suspicious. It was when they had drunk of "gunny-water," made of rum and quinine, that a glimmer of the truth came to Redfern,—the more readily that he had himself determined, if the find were made, to "lose" his partner in this hellish wet wilderness of Manduka. For thus together do the wits of scoundrels jump.

Thicker still the ghastly fever-fog hung round the shadowy boat; but the moon was in mid-heaven and the light had increased, when Green sat up and looked around the boat—silent, but for the snoring of the weary Malay rowers. Neither was there visible the inevitable cheroot-glow which would have told of Redfern's wakefulness. Green stole from under the awning and over the side.

Redfern, a minute later, raised his head and listened—then took his rifle and slipped also away into the half-illuminated mist, which immediately thereafter yielded up a dusky figure that got hastily into the boat and woke its fellows, for the Malay crew had, since dark, been one man short—a secret watcher upon the doings of the whites. Then, by the light of a little cocoa-nut lamp, six swarthy faces gloated over a broken kris—the fragment of the blade rust-eaten to a rugged skewer, but the hilt, of damp-defying gold, set thick with stones that sparkled even through the clinging slime.

The frogs forbore their raucous chorus—alarmed by Redfern's strident laughter.

"What a guileless innocent you take me for! You sneak back here when you think I'm asleep, and you show me a hole that"—with a sneer—"somebody else made! Really, now, young man—

which is to say, young scoundrel! young thief!—you might credit me with some brains.”

Green stamped up a shower of mud. “Scoundrel yourself! Brains or no brains!—there’s the hole, and *I* did n’t make it. And, besides, if I found anything, where is it?”

Redfern threw up his rifle. “Exactly!” he said. “That’s what I want to know. Where is it?”

Green stooped his head. “Listen!” he said; “there’s your answer!”

A hurried sound of oars came faintly through the sluggish air, and both men made off, stumbling and squattering in their haste to reach the main creek.

They were too late! A scornful yell from far away in the fog was all that answered to their shouts.

With the earliest grey of morning Redfern sprang from the mangrove-root on which he had sat silent for hours. “Come!” he said, “let’s get away from here, at all events. Getting out of the Manduka’s another matter!”

Green slowly raised himself from the mud and lit his pipe. “What chance is there of that?” he asked sullenly.

“About one in a hundred!” Redfern answered, belying his belief, for he was a man of science, not ill-versed in jungle-craft, and he thought the odds were in favour of his own escape—unhampered by a tyro’s company.

He eyed his double-rifle as he headed westward through the dreary, dripping mangroves. His cartridges—save the two in the barrels—had gone with the boat. “I could not spare a bullet, even if ——” The other called him, and he turned.

Green, up to his ankles in mud, was dragging out each foot in turn—only to sink the other deeper as his weight came on it. And the up-turned stuff—though the surface was a glossy green—was of a dirty saffron hue. A “porridge-pot,” Redfern knew it for, and, on the instant, turned and made off. This—without his intervention—would rid him of his incumbrance, though to

see the poor wretch slowly perish there was no need. But—blindly rushing from the other's cries—a word came to his ears that stopped him.

"The kris!—the kris! I have it, after all!"

Redfern sped back to where the struggling Green—with wild eyes starting from his fear-blanchèd face—was clawing frantically at the viscid horror that, by this time, held him to the middle. Testing with his rifle-butt, Redfern swiftly found the limit of the fatal "porridge," and, flinging himself full length upon the firmer ground, thrust out the barrels to the utmost.

"What did you say about the kris?" he panted, as he lay.

"I have it!" Green gasped, as he got one hand on the muzzles. "If I sink, it sinks with me!"

And, lying thus for life, he plucked the rifle towards him—and one charge, exploding, sent its bullet through his neck. Then Redfern, stretching eagerly to reach Green's inside-pocket—was caught himself!

For twenty horrible minutes he fought, and prayed, and swore, and yelled to earless solitudes. And, when the noise had ceased, a monstrous green batrachian—squatting on the double grave—croaked solemnly that all was well!

ALEX. MONTGOMERY.



BAILIFFS I HAVE MET.

IT has been remarked that the worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him. A mistake. You can put him to a still worse use. You can make him a bailiff.

I am writing this article in bed, using as a desk a box which at one time, according to the printed legend pasted on its lid, contained seven pounds nett of cocoanut ice. It commenced its career coldly, this poor little box; but it shall end warmly and famously. To-morrow morning I shall split it up into neat little splinters, to which I shall deftly set fire, and therewith boil my coffee. I know that in years to come, when I shall have lost my taste for coffee and all other worldly pleasures, relic collectors will wish that I had not done this thing; but one can't boil coffee on posthumous glory.

Alexander Pope is said to have written most of his translation of the Iliad in bed, but that was mere luxurious laziness on his part. I am writing in bed for the reason that if I were up I would have to sit on the floor to write—a position which, besides being uncomfortable, is apt to make one round-shouldered.

The intelligent reader will gather from the foregoing remarks that the bailiff has been with me. He has been, with a vengeance, and liked my taste in furniture so well that he took it all away with him, including even my little Japanese tobacco-jar, and a Satsuma spittoon of fantastic elegance. I should n't have cared so much if he had left me my engraving of Don Quixote, which used to bring the tears to my eyes every time I looked at it. The noble knight-errant is shown sitting in his chamber, with all his armour around him. His withered hands, with their bony knuckles and outstanding veins and sinews, are clasped on the hilt of his long,

cross-hilted sword, and there is a look of visionary exaltation in his faded eyes which is in itself an inspiration. The valourous Manchegan had also his troubles with the world, even as I have mine.

It is now twelve years ago since I gathered my first practical knowledge of bailiffdom. Even then I did not see a bailiff in the flesh, but I stood in the place—he had left nothing to sit upon—where a bailiff had been, only a few hours before. It was after dusk, one evening in autumn, and, as I knocked at the door of the house in which dwelt my guide, philosopher, and friend of those early days, I thought that the knock sounded singularly loud, as though the house were empty. So it was, in a sense,—its sole contents being my philosopher and his wife and family. They were seated on the floor, in a circle, around a sheet of newspaper, upon which were displayed two or three loaves of bread, a paper bag containing sugar, a large billycan of tea, and some tinned sardines. They were eating with their fingers, and drinking in turns out of a pannikin, which passed from hand to hand, in the manner of a bottle at a small and informal convivial gathering of friends. “You observe,” said my philosopher, with a nod at the newspaper, and a wave of his hand towards the bare walls, “you observe, my young sage, how little the natural man really needs to satisfy his legitimate requirements. All else is mere superfluous luxury. The bailiff relieved me of my superfluous luxury this morning. I bear him no malice on that account. A man of letters” (my philosopher was a contributor to the weekly papers, but always called himself a man of letters) “should fly light in the matter of furniture.”

I looked at the squabbling children on the floor, and thought that the remark might be extended to include family as well as furniture.

My philosopher, however, had his revenge on bailiffdom in due course, as will be seen later on.

A year or so after the foregoing incident, which occurred in Melbourne, I was in Sydney lodging in the house of a friend, who

also described himself as a man of letters. He was, as a matter of fact, a reporter on one of the daily papers, but was endowed with tastes and aspirations far above his position. These found expression in speckled-green jars, papier-mâché statuettes of classical shepherds and shepherdesses, vases of every size and shape, brackets, tables with spiral legs like crossed corkscrews, and other articles of virtu too numerous to mention. The front room of the little house in which he lived was so crowded with these things that it was seldom opened, except when his wife went in to dust them. He had also a library, contained in a carven bookcase with glass doors. It consisted of some forty or fifty volumes, works of the old dramatists. These were carefully numbered and catalogued, and it was (as Artemus Ward called the Tower of London) a Sweet Boon to me to see him, when he required a book, gravely refer to a small ledger, neatly lettered from A to Z on its outer edge, and then, having discovered the registered number of the volume, take the latter out of the bookcase with the air of a man who had found what he wanted on the shelves of the Bodleian or the Bibliothèque Nationale. Of course, Simson (this was not my friend's real name, but it will answer quite as well for present purposes) could have put his hand upon the book at once, without going through this elaborate mummery, but that would not have been Simson's style. "My father," he observed to me upon one occasion, "always kept an index to the books in his library, and I do my best to follow in his footsteps. I have n't the number of books he had—his library contained several thousand volumes; but I can, at least, have an index." This filial sentiment was expressed with so much dignity that I almost felt ashamed of myself for having laughed at the index.

The true shrine of the Simson household, however, was the room in which was stored the gimcrackery previously referred to. Simson himself entered it but rarely, and then trod softly with slippared feet. I accused him once of going in there to worship in secret a hideous porcelain image of the Chinese dragon god which stood on the mantelpiece, but he merely smiled and said I was a hopeless Philistine.

One morning I came downstairs and found the door of the shrine open. I went in, half expecting to surprise Simson in the midst of some mysterious rite, but he was not there. There was somebody in the room, however. A man with tousled hair, a dirty-reddish beard, and a face that looked as if it had been (which was, no doubt, the fact) soaking in beer for years, was lying in a loose heap on the dainty green satin sofa, with one of his huge feet, encased in a broken blucher, resting carelessly on the glory of the shrine—a tall Japanese vase embellished with illustrations of the story of the Forty Ronins. I stared hard at the man, who winked familiarly at me with one bloodshot eye, and I walked out of the room, greatly wondering. In the dining-room I met Simson with hair on end, and eyes glaring wildly. "Who's your friend?" I asked, nodding in the direction of the front room.

"He's no friend of mine!" replied Simson,—and then a base inspiration seemed to come to him, for he added: "He's the wife's uncle."

Of course, the man was a bailiff.

He had insisted on camping in the front room, because he saw that it contained all the really valuable articles in the house.

I am glad to say that Simson managed to raise the money required to meet the ruffian's demand, and to get rid of him before he had been in the house more than a few hours. As it was, he left behind him an effluvium of stale alcohol which hung around the place for days afterwards.

Two or three years passed without my making any further acquaintance with bailiffdom. And then it came about that I stopped one night at a house in Woolloomooloo, wherein dwelt a happy family, consisting of a poet, a piano-tuner, a professor of mathematics, and an artist who painted religious subjects by preference, but, owing to lack of orders in this direction, painted panels of bar-screens and picturesque whisky advertisements for a living. The house was taken in the name of the artist, he being the

only member of the party who did any regular work. The piano-tuner came next in financial importance, but he was not a perfect character in other respects. When he earned a few shillings by tuning a piano, he often started to tune himself up with beer to such an extent that the artist, who was a fastidious person when not himself intoxicated, always insisted on his sleeping in the wood-shed till he became sober again. As for the poet and the professor of mathematics, they also made a little money occasionally,—the poet by writing elegies and epitaphs—and the professor by “coaching” students for examinations. They brought home their money manfully, and handed it over to the artist, who as manfully expended it in the purchase of liquor and tinned provisions for the use of the establishment. Taking them altogether, the happy family was the most genial set of Bohemians I have ever had the fortune to meet with. I do not even except the piano-tuner, as he made up for his periodical bouts by long spells of self-sacrificing total abstinence, and put the money he earned during these intervals into the common fund like a hero. If they had a fault at all it was that they were almost too convivial. They used to drink rum at breakfast, and bottled beer in cups at tea-time.

Of course, a menage of this kind was too gay to last. The end came, as luck would have it, on the morning when I happened to be a guest of the household. I was awakened by hearing a sound of voices in the passage—the artist had made up a bed for me on the floor of the front room with newspapers, and had covered me, in the kindest manner, with one of his great historical cartoons, representing the landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, the paint upon which was alone sufficient to keep me warm, without taking the canvas into account.

I knew at once what the trouble was—the bailiff was in possession. So far, however, he had not penetrated beyond the passage, and the artist, with a ring of pathos in his voice which revealed to me unsuspected depths of feeling in his nature, was imploring him not to take away the furniture without giving him (the artist) a chance to find the coin required, or, at any rate, to

come to some arrangement with the landlord. (The distraint was, I may remark, about to be made for arrears of rent).

"Not me!" said the bailiff, a brutal miscreant bloated with intemperance; "I'm not that kind of bloomin' goat. Fork out the coin at once or I clean out the furnicher."

"Heartless wretch!" exclaimed the artist, turning away with a choking sob, "do your worst!"

The bailiff, signing to his assistant to remain in the passage—a wily precaution against any of the furniture being removed on the sly—went through the house to take an inventory of its contents.

He had not been gone five minutes before he was back in the passage again, cursing and blaspheming in a most shocking style.

"What's the matter!" his assistant asked.

"This is what's the matter!" he replied bitterly, kicking a table made out of an old packing-case into the passage—"this is the kind of thing they have the blanky cheek to call furnicher. Why, s'elp me gawd, there is n't enough in the whole place to pay our blanky fees!"

It was so. Every article of furniture in the house was literally home-made out of palings, packing-cases, and pieces of old deal board, picked up from time to time by the artist and his friends.

I then appreciated the full burlesque significance of the pathetic appeal made to the bailiff with regard to sparing the furniture.

"I am glad to see," observed the artist by way of a parting shot, "that your better feelings have prevailed, and that you intend to leave me my little household treasures."

The bailiff scowled horribly, and went away threatening unutterable things.

"We shall have to move now, boys," said the artist, addressing the others; "we can't stand off the landlord any more on the strength of our furniture."

I have said that my philosopher ultimately had his revenge on bailiffdom. I was on the spot when the revenge was consummated,

having occasion to call on the philosopher with reference to some impracticable scheme peculiarly in his line. There was a van in front of the door, into which a vanman was piling tables, chairs, washstands, bedsteads, and other articles of domestic use. The philosopher, in his shirt-sleeves, and with beads of perspiration rolling down his intellectual forehead, was vigorously assisting.

"Lend a hand here!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of me.

I followed him into the house and saw, lying on a sofa, snoring stertorously, a man who looked like Simson's wife's uncle.

"Take hold of his head!" said my philosopher.

I took hold of his head. The philosopher grasped him by the feet.

"Now, lay him gently down on the floor—steady!"

We laid him on the floor. The movement didn't awake the sodden ruffian, who simply turned over on his side, and grunted drunkenly.

"Now, take hold of one end of the sofa and we'll run it into the van."

Which was accordingly done.

The house was now empty of anything in the shape of furniture. My philosopher, after placing a bottle of beer by the head of the unconscious man in possession, locked the front door and threw the key through the window into the front room.

"I don't pretend to be a practical man, but I think I managed that little affair pretty well," he remarked, making a sign to the vanman to drive on.

"How did you do it?" I enquired.

"Well, I happened to meet the bailiff on his way down to the house. I knew who he was, and where he was going. I also knew he could n't refuse a drink to save his life, and so I took him into a hotel, with the result you have seen. He knew me as a man of letters, but didn't know my name or that I lived in the house we have just left. I could n't make him stay in the hotel, however. Drunk as he was he had still a muddled idea of responsibility, seeing which I offered to accompany him, and brought a flask of rum with

me to 'top off with.' He topped off with it, and the moment he sat down on the sofa where you saw him he went to sleep like the debauched beast he is. For all that, I had to leave him something to recover upon. *Noblesse oblige*, you know—even in dealing with a bailiff. He'll be glad to find that bottle of beer when he wakes."

I have met other bailiffs since then, and the result of my experience is that, as I said in the beginning of this article, the worst use to which you can put a man is to make him a bailiff.

VICTOR J. DALEY.



THREE CUPS OF TEA.

WE tumbled across him in the nor'-west corner of New ^{Yarrowong} South Wales. He was not what you might call a rouseabout. He seemed a decent sort of fellow, and his name was Good ; but he astonished us when he said he did n't like tea.

"Not like tea?" spluttered old Packer. "You're not fool enough to drink the soup they call water here?"

"Sometimes I boil it," replied Good. "Sometimes, if it's extra-smelly, I boil it and put wood-ashes in it ; then I strain it through a handkerchief."

"Well," said Jim Bride, enigmatically, "wot does n't fatten fills. If I'd strained some of the post-and-rail tea I've seen there would n't be much left to drink."

One evening, when a common danger drew all our party together in human friendliness and Time weighed leaden hours, Good told us why he did n't drink tea.

"I had as good a claim on Flying Pig Hill as a man wants ; and, though I lived pretty freely, I managed to put by a few notes. I reckoned to buy a farm down in Gippsland and take things easy. I lived in a hut right on my claim ; but I boarded at old Ching Foo's, because I hated cooking for myself.

"Old Ching Foo kept a straight enough house, and he treated me real well. He would yarn away sometimes as if I was a relation of his ; and once or twice he gave me a nip of the best brandy I ever tasted.

"One night, when I'd had a glass or two and was a bit excited-like because the claim was doing so well, Ching Foo said to me,

‘You come along my house ; I got something I show. You not tell any other fellow ; I say when go.’

“It was dark when we started, but Ching Foo seemed to know the road all right, and I followed him. I don’t know which way we went, but we did n’t walk more than a mile when we struck a house, and Ching Foo took me in. He put me down in a snug chair in a room where one or two lights burned softly, and there was a curious tea-ey smell. Ching Foo left me ; then the lights went up gradually, and in came Ching Foo again, but he was dressed differently. He had on a blue, shiny coat and loose white pants, and his pigtail hung down like a rope.

“We walked into another room, and there we had dinner. Not a boarding-house feed ; but curried fowl, all sorts of vegetables, and such puddings as I’d never tasted before. After dinner we had cigars ; and then a young woman—a little, slim creature with a veil over her face—brought in some tea, and I drank it. Now, that was tea. The smell of it seemed to send one into a kind of dream, and the taste of it made the dream as nice as a dream could be. I saw old Ching Foo smiling away ; then he handed me the box of cigars and said : ‘You smoke these ; velly good. I smoke pipe ’—and I knew by the old fellow’s face that he was going to take his opium.

“I was in a most inexpressibly comfortable mood—perhaps the whisky I’d had in the afternoon might have softened me a bit, but it was that tea that seemed to set me off. The girl entered with another cup. She came close against me, and there seemed to be a sort of magnetism in her. When she took the saucer she seemed to touch my knee, and I declare that touch made me feel as if I’d known her all my life and had been in love with her since I could remember. She was dressed in something thin and soft ; something that showed her rounded shoulders and bust. Lord, the very sight of her was enough to make a fellow feel drunk ! She thought I’d finished my tea, and stooped over me to take the cup ; and then—I swear I could n’t help it—I slid the cup to the floor and put my arms round her. She did n’t draw back ; she seemed to think that

I'd a right to do it. She snuggled softly against me; then she somehow dropped her veil and I saw her face. It was such a face as I'd never seen before, and I suppose I shall never see again. It was white as milk, and small, and her eyes were beautiful as—as . . . and they looked into mine, and I stooped down and kissed her. She whispered 'Are you afraid of Ching Foo?' and I laughed low. As if I'd be afraid of anybody then!

"'Afraid of him!' said I.

"'O hush!' she said; 'be quiet, or he will come.'

"I kept quiet, for I had my arms around her, and I did n't want to move ever again. The whole thing seemed like a dream, but I knew it was real. Such a dainty little figure, and her skin as soft and white as a flower.

"There was a slight sound, and in a moment she was out of my arms and had disappeared.

"Ching Foo came in, and we had a yarn. I told him what the claim was yielding, and pretty well all the best side of my affairs; and he just nodded his head.

"Three nights after that Ching Foo asked me to go home with him again, and I jumped at the chance. It was just the same as before. The room with the lights—the same sort of dinner, the wonderful cup of tea, then Ching Foo taking his opium—then the girl coming in again. She and I drank the tea together. She sat by my side as close as close could be. I kissed her soft, little mouth and her hair—I could have kept on kissing her all my life, and wanted nothing better to do. We did n't talk much, but she asked me my name, and she got me to write it down on a bit of paper, and when I wrote it she kissed me and slipped away. Then Ching Foo came in.

"I fished for another invitation, but old Ching Foo did n't savee my hints until one day he asked me to lend him ten pounds, and said he'd give me security on a section of land he owned, and, as he could n't write, he got Tom Abner and Jerry Brash to witness his mark. As he signed it, he whispered, 'You satisfy take tea

alonga me, to-night?' and I said, 'You bet I'm satisfied, and devilish glad to get it.'

"Old Ching Foo said low-like to me, 'You sign paper, too.' I was going to tell him that there was no occasion for me to sign, but he seemed to know what was in my mind, and looked sulky, and I was thinking of the chance of seeing that girl, so I signed just to please him, and he laughed like a happy boy.

"It came again—room, dinner, cigars, the cup of tea, and—and my girl. She seemed to come straight to my arms, and I held her fast.

"I drank the cup of tea at a gulp when I found she would not share it. It tasted a bit bitter, being a trifle strong. I wonder how I remember this, for I had her in my arms before the cup was well out of my hands. Her dark hair was loosened and hung down in long, wavy lines; her veil lay on the floor. I looked into her eyes, she looked into mine; then her lips seemed to come to mine, her arms went round my neck. . . . Poof! folks may talk about opium and that stuff; but that girl was real. Could I remember it all so well after so many years? No, I held her, and I don't want heaven to be any better than that; and it lasted—was it an hour or a second? . . .

"When I came to myself I was in a stinking little hovel that some Chinese gardeners used to own, and when Tom Abner saw me he said, 'Well, I'm blamed! Why, it's town-talk that you had bought Ching Foo's section and had gone down to Melbourne to float a big thing in mines.'

"When I went to the township I found that Ching Foo had presented a cheque signed by me at the bank, and had drawn out all my money. Tom Abner and Jerry Brash had seen me sign the transfer, and had heard me say that it was all right, and that I was satisfied.

"Well, and I was satisfied. Ching may have got at me badly; but I'd pay twice as much—aye, a hundred times as much, if I had it—for another meeting with that girl."

F. ROLLITT.

SILHOUETTES.

MY HORSE.

I own a tall, domesticated horse of the semi-angular type of beauty. He has an open countenance, a hollow back, and an expressive hazel eye. A former owner of the horse removed the other eye. This person was vexed and mortified because he could not catch the horse, and in the heat of the debate assaulted the animal with a gun. The horse has been sceptical about the trustworthiness of human nature ever since. I have owned him for a long time now, but I have not yet won his entire confidence. His name is Parkes.

He associates with a number of illiterate quadrupeds that roam the bush here, and they all regard Parkes as their chieftain. When any member of the mob finds a patch of couch-grass, Parkes depresses his ears and sidles alongside with a sour look. If the animal knows Parkes he goes away. But if he stays there, Parkes bites his neck and kicks him until he does adjourn. Then my horse eats the grass in a thoughtful way, and afterwards gets another horse to reverse ends with him, and whisk the flies off with his tail. But Parkes does not whisk for the other horse. He is too languid.

Many people think it is easy to catch Parkes, but they are wrong. They are deceived by the statuesque attitude he assumes when another horse is being caught. But when you approach Parkes with a bridle, he smiles satirically and goes away quite rapidly. That is, if you have only a bridle. But if you have a tin dish of corn, he takes the corn with him. He gets it by degrees from your hand, and when you grab for his front hair he ducks and cross-counters with his front paws. He is very quick with his left.

Last winter I made a rug for Parkes with two flour-bags and a

clothes-line. He was pleased with the effect, and at once struck up an intimacy with a neighbour's cow, although before that he was a very bashful horse in female society.

The neighbour's cow's name is Mike. Her owner was facetious and named her Mike Howe. But (he is dead now) I am told he was otherwise a most estimable man, and a model husband and father.

Mike and my horse became very affectionate, and my horse got quite vain and haughty, because of the distinguished look the rug gave him. But one day, when he was trying to help Mike's calf into a lucerne paddock, the rug became disarranged. The ropes straddled his back, and the main body of the rug clung confidently to his abdomen. When he next called on Mike, she received my horse coldly. He was hurt at this, and came home to me to have his garb refitted ; but I took it off and made it into a meat-safe.

Mike never afterwards associated with my horse. She even pretended that she did not recognise him, and dropped his acquaintance altogether. Her cruelty broke my horse's heart, and he has never since recovered his old gaiety of spirit. He pushed Mike's calf down a shaft last week ; but he is still gloomy and abstracted.

I think his disposition is permanently soured.

A. CHEE.



HANGING AND HELL.

THERE are at least six Hanging Rocks and three Gallows Hills in New South Wales. There is one Hell. I've been there, thus :

Assize time in Wagga Wagga and a man on trial for murder. Another man, myself, on trial of sobriety, dead broke, hat battered, boots unlaced, swag all no-how, and so nervous that the gambolling of Pop scares me. Funny that that animal is never so delighted as when I shoulder bluey. I pass the court-house ; a knot of idlers are round the gate, a policeman comes out and says, "They'll hang

him!" I'm off like a shot, and in my ears the din of "Hang him, hangin', hangin', hang, 'ang, 'ng—ng—ng!" Then I turn a corner to get out of public gaze. Unluckily, I pass the side door of the building. I am spell-bound; there I see an awful visage, a face with such a ghastly mouth, and such a dress below the mouth, for the mouth has taken charge of the face, like the Cheshire Cat's grin in Wonderland. Then the grin and the hair, the mouth and the gown, the words and the black cap take me by the shoulders and elsewhere and hustle me on to the river bank. "Hang, hang, hang—ng—ng!" and now I've got them. I know they're on me and so does Pop, because he whines and fawns on me. But for Pop I'd have shown the horrors. Now I only feel them.

Then I walk and walk and walk. It seems two days, but it's not so wearisome, because I have music,—that rhythm, you know, always in my ears. It's company if it's horrible, and the dog is some consolation. Next, I find myself by a vineyard full of angels; they give me three tumblers of wine and a bottle for the road. They wish me to stay, and see me through my recovery, but—that grin, that mug, that wig, and the little black cap! I'm off.

Again I travel about a week, in my mind's eye, and camp near an old shed under a tree. There's a paling fence near, and it looks like the bars of a cage or prison.

But the tree—the gallows-tree! The boughs are scraggy, and the leaves white on top; there's a break in the middle, and a guard round the barrel. It looks like that head. The gap is the cavernous mouth, and the sougling of the breeze is "Hang him, they'll hang him!"

Still, I'm not so badly off. I can see an angel or two feeding Pop. A man comes down with a pint of tea and a plate of soup. He tells me this is the "Burnt Hut," and that the fires are Hell. Just then he's called by the overseer, and says "Hang him!" Now I'm off again. The din begins, the tree shivers, the head wags, the mug mutters, some crows perch on the top and make a black cap, and I fall asleep near the paling fence—the prison cage.

When I wake I look through. I see Pop, watching my swag on the other side, and a man tying the legs of a sheep. That sheep is, to me, myself. He skins it, and calls to his mate, "Come and help me to hang him!" The wretch is going to hang me, the same good fellow who gave me the soup. Luckily, I spot the bottle of wine. I reach for it and drink it, holding the bottle by the neck. I know that I am being hung—hanged, I mean; but I'm not going to let them touch me, myself, the "alter ego." They come near me and fetch the overseer, who brings me a nip of the real Mackay. It is now a little funny: I'm hung, and still drinking whisky, and the hangman is n't so bad. I suppose the overseer's the devil, because he says, in a sort of pitying tone, "Well! is n't this hell?"

Another snooze, and I awake. It ought to be dark, but it is n't. The night is lit up by bush-fires on and around a pinnacle of smoke and flame. We can see the timbers falling, the sparks rising. "We" are the men and I. I can see the wig and the mouth and the grin and the corpse, standing out like red lights on a murky background. A calico shroud has been tied round the sheep, and it now looks like a suspended ghost. I fancy its soul has gone to—well, blazes was my thought. Then I become sure of it, because the overseer—the devil, I mean—calls the men to look at the Hanging Rock, the pillar of fire, and tells them or half asks them, "Is n't it hell?" What with the Hanging and the Hell, I start again (mentally), and have my little song of "Hang him, hang him, hell, 'ell, well—not so bad—hang—hell!"

And I awoke; and behold, it was a dream. "Well, old fellow! Are you better? Can you cook? Can have a job if you like. Only me and some fencers. We're out all day. Tackle it to-morrow. I'll give you a nip or two—I've had 'em myself."

But there are few overseers like the one who used to be at the Burnt Hut, under the Hanging Rock. "Is n't it hell?"

THE SCHOOL AT SERGEANT'S.

OF all the small bush schools I ever had the misfortune to be in charge of, I think with least regret of the school at Sergeant's. And this, with other things, leads me to say that the experience of teachers does not vary so much with the schools as with the places they board at. Practically, the schools are alike—little wooden boxes with iron roofs—cold as Kiandra in winter and hot as Booligal in summer. Nowadays the buildings are even more uniform—built to style, as it were ; but in my day the only difference was in the width of the cracks. The children are always the same (God forgive them !); the results never vary ; and the same loneliness pervades all. But the chief difference in the place you board at is that each is the worst. All except Sergeant's.

Old Sergeant was one of the finest men I ever saw—six-feet-two at sixty-three ! A rugged and seamed old face, clean-shaven but for a fringe of white hair about his neck ; eyes clear as a child's ; and a mouth that expressed determination except when he was in company and could n't get rid of the superfluous saliva engendered by his inactivity. He was a rough old customer, with many quaint and truthful sayings—more or less concerning women, and more or less unprintable. But his veneration for his wife was almost pathetic. It showed in his speech. With a total disregard for grammar, it was, "When me an' Tom was on Lambing Flat," or "The time me and Bill Wade was overlandin',"—but every reference to her was "Mother and me"; and "Was n't it, mother?" comprised half of his yarns.

The family were all married ; and, in the long winter evenings, after my solitary tea—my mouth waters even now at the memory of those preserves—I would go into the kitchen and find the old woman knitting socks, and old Sergeant making picture-frames of fruit-stones and cones. A steaming glue-pot by his side, and pliers in his hand, he cracked the nuts and fitted the pieces with such minute care that to cover three square inches of frame was a long night's work. After a while, I drew designs for him to pick

out with different kinds of stones, and even essayed one myself—which was picked to pieces in more ways than one. And then, in front of the log fire, he would tell stories of the old times, or I would play the fiddle.

He would never let me play my best piece—"Home, Sweet Home"—because: "When me and Tom was on Araluen—that was before mother and me took up, was n't it, mother?—we got word that a great fiddler, called Something-Whisky, was comin'. There was a bit of a hall at the pub., and me and Tom was often there, doin' a bit of steppin' and such. Me and Tom was counted the best steppers on the diggin's—leastways, Tom always played," he added, with characteristic modesty. "Well, Whisky took the hall, and we all dressed up to take out our ten bobs' worth; and, my word! there was a mixed crowd there—was n't there, mother? Well, Whisky came out, and as soon as he starts we could see he was a fine player; but there was too much shakes and such for us. He ran up and down like winkin' till big Tom M'Grath—you remember Tom, mother?—stands up on a seat and says: 'I move Jack Sergeant does a step.' That was me; and before old Whisky knew where he was I was at it. Whisky stood on one side pattin' his fiddle and speakin' some language to himself, while I gave a new step me and Tom had been practisin' on the quiet. Well, of course, there was drinks; but no one remembered old Whisky, till he ups and starts playin' 'Home, Sweet Home,' just plain like. Sometimes now, when I'm lyin' in bed, it comes to me; don't it, mother? Well, you never heard a lot of fellows cough and clear their throats like we did. After that we cleared the stage, and made him promise only to play plain tunes we knew, and then we all goes out and paid afresh to come in; did n't we, mother?"

When the old woman died I offered to move, but old Sergeant would n't hear of it. "You stay along with me and we'll rub along—you was a favourite of hers." One night he selected one from a number of tombstone photographs and asked me to write the inscription. He looked over my shoulder and spelled the words as

I wrote "Sacred to the memory of Jane, the beloved wife of——" Then he stopped me. "What's wrong?" I asked. "Well," he said, "her and me was never properly married; best rub out wife and put helpmate. She was that—true—was n't you, mother?" said the old man dreamily.

PONTE.



THE BURIAL SERVICE OF A MUSICIAN.

WE gathered around the open grave, ten of us, and gazed down silently at the plain deal coffin. None of us knew any burial-service, but something of the sort seemed necessary, so we stood puzzling our brains to recall some good action of the deceased. After a lapse of several minutes Jones mentioned how the corpse had once treated Cornish Joe to a big burst. This had been better left unsaid; for we all remembered that the sequel to that action was running through the traveller's pockets and abstracting the contents.

There was another silence of five minutes while we moved our feet about, shuffling the loose earth into rude circles. Then Darbyshire whispered that perhaps if we sang something it would be better than keeping dead silence. There was no answer to Darbyshire's suggestion.

By and by, Murphy could stand it no longer. "Boys," he cried, "d'ye moind the toime he did Ginger Smith outer a pen at Gerogery? A low, sneaking hound he was!"

"Ay, he was that," chipped in old M'Dougall. "Do ye no' remember him saltin' the South claim, too?"

We all remembered it well. Our tongues were loosened at once, and each of us had some anecdote to relate of the perfidy of the departed. For an hour or more we stayed, until the pauses grew longer between the yarns, and ultimately conversation came to a stop. We shovelled in the earth and left a yellow mound to mark

the spot. Then we made for the Miner's Arms to drink the corpse's health.

"Fill 'em up, mon," said M'Dougall. "He was a dom'd scoundrel, but, my oath, he could play the Jew's harp!"

Mc G.



SELLING SCRIPTURE TEXTS.

THERE are many different ways of making a living; but selling Scripture texts is not one of them. I discovered this in two days. A friend who frames pictures in Sydney gave me some nice little works of art with a passage of Scripture in one corner, and I started out to supply a long-felt want. I always thought that when people are up to their eyes in debt and trouble would be the right time to drop in with some nice little texts, setting forth that "The Lord will provide," etc. It seems not. But I should have sold more if I had only known what part of the town the Christians live in. I'm satisfied of that. As soon as I find that out I intend to make money. I met some queer people, though, for a person who does n't know the town.

One of them is the woman who tells you, after a lot of talk, that she has a house-full of pictures—more than she has room to hang up; and just then one of the children opens the door wide and you discover that the walls are perfectly bare, excepting here and there a large, red spot where some robust bed-insect paused abruptly. And I like the woman who opens the door and smiles. When you put your pictures down on the door-step and start to clear your throat, she slams the door and knocks your pictures right to the bottom of the steps. Your throat clears very suddenly just here, and you quote Scripture which is n't on the texts. This person always lives in a fine, big house, being a lady.

After a few of these confidential interviews, I ceased to wonder how anarchists were built. I have a recipe which would make an anarchist of Job. If this meets the eye of any anarchist who wishes

to begin work in Sydney, I will be glad to point out some houses which I think could be blown to pieces conveniently, and at little cost. I hate to see any man out of work.

Then there is the Salvation woman, who reads your texts over in a sacred voice as though afraid of stepping on her creed, and tells you to "Remember what them says!" Every minute at that house is time heaved away. The Sunday-school teacher—ditto. I think a lot of the man who sits smoking his pipe on the back verandah, and, when you come to the side-gate and ask if that dog will bite, says, "Sometimes." A second glance at the house convinces you that the people in there don't know a nice, neat picture when they see it. Consequently, they don't see it.

I also met the man who said "he got some of them Scripture things once, but the kids knocked"—well, a very tropical place—"out of them." Yes, I met some queer people. In fact, the only people I didn't meet were the people who wanted some nice little religious pictures. If the Apostle Paul were here now, he would soon knock off selling Scripture texts, and start out with "The Life of the Kelly Boys," or "Bushranging in Australia." Then he might make a living.

BOILING BILLY.



"COLONIAL EXPERIENCE."

HE was a good fellow—the boss liked him, the hands liked him: in fact, we all liked him.

It was only eight months since he had come from England to Yowlahmine Station with a letter of recommendation to Mr. Foster, our boss. His name was Edward—Ted, we used to call him; Ted Oscott. Nobody thought of calling him Mister now, except Maggie M'Farlane.

Maggie's father was the married man on the home station. Ted thought a lot of Maggie, and often used to sit with her under

the old fig-tree behind the store of a night and tell her about England and his people.

One night he asked her why she did n't call him "Ted" and not "Mister Oscott." She said she did n't like, as he might think her forward. Maggie was very shy.

Ted thought he would change the conversation, so he asked her if she knew that Murphy was leaving. Murphy was one of the married boundary-riders.

Maggie said she had heard her father saying something about it, and she was very glad if it was true; because she never did like Murphy, and did n't want to see him any more—or his wife, either.

Ted assured her that it was true, and the boss had offered the billet to him (Ted), remarking at the time that it would be a good chance for him to marry Maggie.

Ted then drew a little closer, and asked her if he might tell Mr. Foster that he would take his offer. Maggie said she would see what her father said.

Anyhow, it was soon arranged. They were to ride into Nerribong on Monday, get married and spend a few days, and then on Sunday ride home to Murphy's, where everything would be ready for them.

Nerribong, Saturday night. Maggie had gone to bed, and Ted was paying Hennessy, the landlord, for the week's accommodation, when who should walk into the bar but Murphy! Ted ordered drinks, and Murphy wished him luck and told him he had got another job, at Greendale, and was going out in the morning. Then they went to bed.

When Ted walked into the yard next morning, two horses were hung up at the post, saddled. One was Murphy's; the other the one that Maggie had ridden in from Yowlahmine. Murphy had brought them up from the paddock, but could n't find Ted's horse anywhere. Ted went to look for him, but with no success.

When he came back Maggie was mounted and ready, and Murphy was pulling down the slip-rails to let her pass through.

Having got both horses outside, he carefully replaced the rails and bade Ted "Good morning!"

"Wait a minute," says Ted. "Where are you going?"

"Greendale," answers Murphy.

"She going with you?"

"Yes."

"Going to stay with you?"

"Yes."

"But where's your wife?"

"Left her at Yowlahmine—she expects you to-night."

"Ah, well," says Ted, "you had better come and have a drink before you go. It's pretty sultry this morning."

"Going to have a hot day, I think," says Murphy.

Ted thought so too.

He was a good fellow—we all liked him. He hasn't come back from Nerribong yet.

J. P.



THE FERRYMAN.

MITCHELL stood six feet in his stockings. By the water's edge, the boat; behind the shingle bed, the green turf; on the turf, the cottage. Part dairyman, part stock-raiser, and a big lump digger—that is the ferryman.

"Familiarity breeds contempt." You see the mariner of thirty years lash the rope of the sail in its cleat. You see the engine-driver of ten years fall in a moment under the ponderous wheels of the locomotive. You watch the successful pilot of a hundred races thrown, dragged by the stirrup, and brained. Why should the ferryman be an exception?

Was it a river? Yes, when it rained; in fine weather it was only a creek. But then it often rained. At such times the water changed its colour and became a sour white. There is a caution in that which is fickle.

Like a million other streams, its destiny was the Pacific. Under cover of the clouds the sea found time to whisper as they embraced :

"I am thy mother—some children played upon the shore to-day—I coveted them, but the tide was spent. Bring me a corpse of man to make me sport."

And the river promised.

That night the sky was filled with silver cords. It was the rain. The river gurgled and rose. Mitchell took his lantern at ten o'clock, and went to see to his boat. He found water all round it.

The river eyed him cunningly. The boat never warned him. Below the boat was a recent eddy—breathless, triumphant. It had but that minute torn a huge hole in the shingle.

Putting the lantern on the bank, Mitchell stepped into the water to drag the boat further up the beach. He clutched the gunwale, and felt that his feet were drawn right under. At the same instant the boat began to pay out broadside down the stream.

Mitchell opened his mouth to cry for help. That attempted appeal was his death-warrant, swimmer though he was. In an instant his head went under.

The water poured down his throat. In fancy he felt his mother gently stroking his cheek. He loosed his grasp of the boat. When he rose, the power to struggle was for ever gone.

Mitchell's wife took the tin lamp, and, with her daughter, went in quest of her husband. The other children crowded in the doorway. The lantern still burned, but it rested on the stones. Where were the hands that had brought it there ?

"Coo-ee !"

No answer.

"Coo-ee-ee !"

Silence is a mocker.

The river was too high to cross to the township, but one of the boys rode five miles down the bank to a neighbour's place for counsel and assistance. There is sublimity in the compulsory craving for sympathy at such a time.

Ex-lieutenant Hamborough, once a soldier, now a beachcomber, rubbed his huge hands with satisfaction. The sea had been rough. There was a fine flat of sand with a bank of six feet at high-tide mark. All night had the sea sluiced those tons of stuff.

He reckoned twenty ounces at least.

He took his box with its plush and blanket ripples and sallied out. Gold sticks in hair. Maybe that is how woman first learned to feed vanity from effect.

Descending the bank, he began to shovel the useful sand into heaps.

He stopped, for the shovel struck a portion of flesh. He bored more. It was a man's back. He uncovered the lot, and identified it easily. It was his old friend, Mitchell, who had fought by his side at Cawnpore. And the knots of twenty years worn into the rope with which he had carried his box were easier to unravel than the wherefore of this strange meeting arranged by Fate.

Do not play at hazards with danger ; keep well on the upper side.

L. DE BAKKER.



BARMY BARKER'S BOOTS.

You see, Barmy Barker was once trampin' the roads. He was always forgettin' himself and was half his time bushed. He was awful absent-minded, was Barker. For instance, he'd get up in the mornin' and would n't know no more 'n the man in the moon which way he'd been goin' the night afore, and ten to one he'd go back t' where he'd come from. He 'ad n't gumption enough to beat about and track himself. He'd no idea of anythink barrin' straight ahead to nowhere in particular. What he was goin' for—he did n't know. Once he scorned the offer of a good billet, when he was downright 'ard-up for one. It came o' bein' 'ead-over-ears in some big scheme or other in his mind.

Often as not he'd go to stations with his tucker-bags and come

away with nothin'. Could n't recollect what took him up, and forgot his bags thinkin' of it. Then he'd 'ave to ante-up a bob to a blackfellow to show him where he left his swag. When it come to payin', Barker'd say, quite innocent, "Do I owe you a shillin': what was it for, now? I can't think." "Me find um swag." "But that's my swag. I put it there." "Das right, boss. You been lose um camp, see?" Barker'd barney over that for an hour sometimes, but he'd stump up at last. He lost a mint o' money that way.

Anyhow, ratty as he was, he hit on a good plan to steer by. When he'd come to his campin'-place he'd take his boots off, and leave 'em pointin' the right way. Then he could twist about as much as he liked takin' his swag off, and makin' preparations in gen'ral for the night. Till them boots was right, though, he darsn't turn, or he'd be flabbergasted altogether. In the mornin' everything must be shouldered for the track 'fore he dare step into 'em. Otherwise he might get turned pickin' up something. He did go without 'em wonst, and it was n't till he'd picked forty or so thorns out o' his feet it occurred to him he was in the 'abit o' wearin' boots. A trav'ler fetched 'em along for him that time.

One night he 'ad to get up and go to the waterhole for a drink. That was the turnin'-point in his life. He put his boots on—it bein' the time snakes go picnickin' and matin'; and there's nothin' in the wide world that sets Barker's hair standin' on end more'n snakes.

When he got up next day the boots was facin' the waterhole.

"Dang it!" says Barker; "I did n't know I 'ad to cross that!"

But the boots pointed that way, so there was no get out of it. It was only fifty yards round that hole, but leather said cross it, and 'cross it went Barker—up to his neck. He felt miserable when he got out, for Barker was n't used to bein' wet. So he stripped off to dry. When he was ready to start ag'in he found his compass 'ad gone bung once more. One boot pointed east, t' other west. "Now, which way am I goin'?" says Barker. He sat down to think it out. But it was n't no use. Thinkin' made him giddy, and put

him in such a gen'ral muddle that he lost sight o' what he wanted to think about. So he saw there was no help then but to wait till some one came along.

So Barker filled his pipe. He 'ad n't 'ad a smoke that mornin', and his mouth was waterin'. Soon he was puffin' away big licks, and found it a good help to his brain. So he tried ag'in to think them boots the one way, and finished up with bandicootin' murphies in the old country. He was that disgusted that he grabbed the old clay-dabber to knock the ashes out, and then he saw as he 'd never lit it. Barker saved a lot o' 'bacca in his time forgettin' the match part o' the performance.

As luck 'appened, a stockman came in sight about dinner-time. Barker cooeyed, and he came over. "'Scuse me," says Barker; "would you do me a favor, mate? I'm a bit flummoxed." "Certainly, old man—if it's not too much trouble. What is it?" "Ah, what is it? Lemme see—Oh! . . . Will you tell me where I'm goin' to, and oblige—yours sincerely" . . . Barker was workin' it off on his fingers.

"Why, strike me dead!" says the stockman to himself, "that bloomin' old fool's mad!"

"Where am I goin'?" asks Barker again.

"Off yer nanny," says the stockman, riding off. "Keep straight on, and you'll not be long afore you're there."

Barker chewed that over for an hour. One boot said east and one said west. Which was straight on? "Dang me if I don't go with Bobindie," says Barker—he called one of them boots Bobindie. So he put Bobindie on and went west. That night he struck a dry gully, and near perished for want of water. "You're the devil's own," says Barker. "To blazes with you!"

He got back next night—how, I dunno—and he says to the other boot, that he called Brian Boroo: "Brian," he says, "we'll go east at your wish, and the Lord strike you blind if your designs be treacherous!" So he put on Brian Boroo and went east, leaving Bobindie to perish. He'd 'ave no more truck with that gentleman.

In three hours Brian Boroo kicked ag'in a slug o' gold, and

Barker danced and howled in his delight. Before sundown he struck this one-orse place where I'm treed now. But in Barker's eyes, with that slug shining in 'em, this miserable old creek was Heaven. So here he stuck. He was offered a tidy sum afterwards by a shindykit in the township to show 'em the spot where Brian hit the slug; but, Lor' bless you! by that time Barker knew as much of its whereabouts as a gorilla.

Anyway, he took the old blucher off, and knelt down 'fore the 'ouses and kissed him. "Brian Boroo," says Barker, "you 're a brick!" So he pensioned him off straight away, and—well, there's the old fellow, snug and comfortable, in that glass case.

Me? Oh, I'm Barmy Barker.

E. S. SORENSON.



THE BENEFIT OF CLERGY.

As Father Connolly reached the door of the Squatters' Rest a dozen arms were stretched out to hold his horse and help him alight.

"It's a hot ride you've had, sure, father?" said the buxom proprietress.

"Faith, hot's no name for it, Mrs. Dargan. Is there anny-thing left in moi bottle?"

"Well, it's close on four months since ye was here, yer riverince; but I've got some good old Irish tack ye're welcome to."

"That's right, mother! Let's have some, an' a bite, too; for Oi'm off again immadiately."

"Ye won't be stayin' the night, then?"

"No. Oi've a sick-call at Bull-bull Station, and Oi must start again at once and get there to-noight."

"I'm sorry for yer hurry, father; for there's some business for ye here."

"Indade! And what moight it be?"

"Well, father, there's Mary. She be near her time to Ted Hogan, at Howlong; an' they wants joinin'."

"Call 'em in, mother!"

Mrs. Dargan went out of the parlour, and soon came back followed by Mary and her lover, a hard-faced young boundary-rider, who, fortunately for himself and the object of his affections, had ridden over to the Squatters' Rest that morning.

"So!" said the priest, sternly, "so! ye've not had the dacency to wait moi comin'?"

The young couple made no reply.

"How do ye expect to obtain a blessin'," continued the priest, "whin ye stale the joys of matrimony widout God's lave? Kneel down, the pair of ye! Now, say the worrds afther me. Mrs. Dargan, call all hands in as witnesses!"

For some minutes the ceremony proceeded; then the priest asked, "Mary O'Neill, do ye take this man for your husband?"

"Yer ain't asked 'im if 'e'll 'ave me first, father."

"Soilence, you hussy! Will you have him? He is going to marry you."

"Yes, yer reverence."

"That's roight. There now! ye are man and woife, and God bless ye!"

"Whisky all round, mother!" cried Ted Hogan; and all joined in the toast which followed.

"Is there annything else now, Mrs. Dargan?" asked the priest, pocketing the pound-note given him by the newly-wedded man.

"Yes, yer riverince; there's a baptism."

"Whose is the infant?"

"It's Jane's, father."

"Jane! She's not married!"

"Ah! poor thing, father, she's in a bad way, an' her man won't be here this side Christmas."

"Who is he?"

"Alick M'Intyre, the bullocky."

"Heavens! the sin, the sin of it all! Fetch the mother and choild in at once."

A pale young woman was brought in, bearing in her arms a fine little boy a month or two old.

"Ah! Jane, you've been in a divil of a hurry," said the priest, not unkindly. "Who stand sponsors for this choild? God bless him! He's a beauty, too."

A toothless old rabbiter in for a spree, and a young fellow from a neighbouring selection, stepped forward, and the ceremony was soon over.

"There, Jane, me gurrl, the little wan is as pure as snow now. But what's all those tears for? Mrs. Dargan, what's wrong?"

The women-folk, as if by magic, had all begun to sob; and the men stood here and there conversing in whispers and looking very glum.

"Come now, mother, what's the maning of it all?" asked the priest again, and impatiently this time.

"Ah, father, there's pretty Nellie yet!"

"An' what, in heaven's name, is wrong with her?—the angel of the flock. The pride of the Big Gum Plain. The flower among so many weeds."

There was a ring of alarm in the old man's tones, and he looked anxiously from one to the other.

"Faith, father, it's buryin' she wants."

"Burying? Nellie dead! No, no. So bright, so fair. The queen of you all! Not dead!"

"Indade, father."

"Take me to her!"

"She's all nicely laid out; with a pretty coffin, too, made by Ted, here. The poor lamb died yester-morn."

Mrs. Dargan led the priest into an adjoining room where, on a stretcher, lay the body of poor Nellie. She had been a very beautiful girl, and even Death could not rob her perfect features of their charm. The long golden hair had been carefully brushed and

trained down each side of the reclining figure. On her breast was a bunch of wild flowers.

"She's bin aillin' since your last visit, father. The young gentleman from Mooraboo run was after her, and Nellie was very fond of him. But the damn blackguard, savin' your presence, father, wint away an' got spliced to a lady in Adelaide, an' our girl here broke her poor heart an' died."

Mrs. Dargan told her tale with many sobs.

"And was she innocent, do you think, mother?" asked the priest, anxiously.

"More 's the pity, no, father. She ——"

"God, God! The sin, the sin! Poor lamb, to be wrecked by that son of the devil. Wait until Oi meet him!—which, plase Heaven, will be soon. Now bring all hands in, Mrs. Dargan, and Oi 'll say prayers."

And when the prayer was over he spoke to them about the savage way they were living, and said the back-blocks should be called the Black-blocks, for there was no light there. An hour later, after Nellie's body had been placed in the rough grave prepared for it, Father Connolly took his leave of the shanty and its inmates, blessing them all from his seat in the saddle. And as he rode away a tear trickled down his face. "Lord!" he cried, "when will women know men?"

ALEX. ALLEN.

THE END.

BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX

BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX OF WRITERS, 1901.*



ABBOTT, PERCE. Born Pittsburg, Penn., U.S.A., 30th September, 1859; father Scottish, mother Irish. Married, with one child. "After a joyous, stormy youth was trained for the law; but before serving his articles was offered post of U.S. Consul at Dunedin. Thence went to Fiji as managing clerk to a barrister who was also editor of *Fiji Gazette*. Came to New South Wales and edited a Riverina paper. All over the world in the last five years. In Kimberley the night of the Jameson raid; made a living in London as paragraphist, song-writer, and entertainer; conducted the orchestra at Pier Pavilion, Southend." Returned to Australia; died at Melbourne, 9th Nov., 1901.

BECKE, GEORGE LOUIS ("Ula Tula," "Te Matau," "Papalagi"); literary writer. Born at Port Macquarie, N.S.W., 1848; of English parentage. Married, with one child. Trader and supercargo throughout the South Sea Islands from 1870 to 1893. Returned to Sydney and contributed many stories to *The Bulletin*; till leaving for London in 1896. Publications: *By Reef and Palm*, London, 1894; *His Native Wife*, Sydney, 1895, London, 1896; *The Ebbing of the Tide*, London, 1895; *A First Fleet Family* (with Walter Jeffery), Sydney and London, 1896; *The Mystery of the Laughlin Islands* (with Walter Jeffery), 1896; *Pacific Tales*, London, 1897; *Wild Life in Southern Seas*, London, 1897; *Rodman the Boat-steerer*, London, 1898; *The Mutineer* (with Walter Jeffery), Sydney and London, 1898; *Ridan the Devil*, London, 1899; *The Naval Pioneers of Australia* (with Walter Jeffery), London, 1899; *Old Convict Days* (edited) London, 1899; *Admiral Phillip* (with Walter Jeffery), London, 1899; *Tom Wallis*, London, 1900; *Arrecifos*, London, 1900; *Tessa*; *The Trader's Wife*, London, 1901; *The Tapu of Banderah* (with Walter Jeffery) London, 1901; *By Rock and Pool*, London, 1901.

CASTIEAU, JOHN BUCKLEY ("Paul Mell"); public servant. Born Beechworth, Vic., 4th May, 1868; of British parentage. Married, with two children. Formerly free-lance journalist; in 1889 joined the Industrial Schools and Police department of Vic. public service.

DAVIS, ARTHUR HOEY ("Steele Rudd"); public servant. Born Drayton, Q., 14th November, 1868; father Welsh, mother Irish. Married in 1894 Violet Brodie, of Greenmount, Darling Downs; three children. "Was born eighth in family of thirteen. When a child removed to Stanthorpe, then to Emu Creek, where his father (blacksmith by trade) engaged in farming.

DAVIS, ARTHUR HOEY.—*Continued.*

Went to school (sometimes) at Emu Creek till about twelve, then struck out on his own and went 'picking up' at shearing sheds. From fifteen to eighteen permanently employed stock-riding and droving for Pilton station. About this age found himself deciding between the Bush and the Office. Preferred the Bush, but was persuaded into the Office. Received appointment as junior clerk and messenger in office of Curator of Intestate Estates at Brisbane. Did n't like the ways of an office, but made the best of it. Developed a taste for reading. Worked hard in spare hours and among other things taught himself shorthand; subsequently assisted to form Q. Shorthand Writers' Association. In '89 was appointed clerk in Sheriff's office, and made the acquaintance of The Hangman. Attracted by Gordon's poems, and by Lawson's work in *The Bulletin*, decided to try his hand; and, after contributing Bush matter to local papers, commenced a series of sketches in *The Bulletin*—'On Our Selection.' Belonged to Brisbane Gymnasium, played football, cricket, tackled rowing, and at present time is generally regarded as a bit mad on polo. Thinks it is the best game ever played by man or brute." Publication: *On Our Selection*, Sydney, 1899.

DEMPSEY, EDWARD JAMES; journalist. Born Sydney, N.S.W., 28th May, 1866; of Irish parentage. Unmarried. Assistant-editor of *The Town and Country Journal*, Sydney, since 1893.

DORRINGTON, ALBERT ("Alba Dorion.") Born at Stratford-on-Avon, Eng., 14th August, 1871; of English parentage. Unmarried. "Attended King Edward's Grammar School, Birmingham, until his sixteenth year. Came to Australia in 1884; and, after many unsuccessful bids for fortune in Melbourne and Adelaide, began a tour through Australia as a newspaper and general advertising canvasser. Within two years had wandered from Adelaide to Bourke, from Bourke to Torres Straits, working the back towns, and thereby gaining a knowledge of bush life. In 1895 began contributing to *The Bulletin*. Now in business in Sydney; devoting his spare time to literature." Publication: *Castro's Last Sacrament and Other Stories*, Sydney, 1900.

DYSON, EDWARD GEORGE ("Silas Snell"); journalist. Born at Morrison's ("Muddy Water Holes" of the early days) between Geelong and Ballarat, Vic., 4th March, 1865; of English parentage. Unmarried. "Attended State Schools at Bendigo, Ballarat, and at Alfredton, a small mining township near Ballarat, until thirteen years of age. Spent most of youth at Alfredton. Fossicked assiduously as a youngster at Bendigo, Ballarat, Clunes and Alfredton, and soaked up the mining inspiration that has since trickled out in verse and story. Left school to work as a whim-boy, battery-feeder, etc. Went to a Tasmanian field, Lefroy, at the age of seventeen; worked there in the shallow alluvial and afterwards sluicing for pyrites, and on the brace. Returned to Vic., and worked in batteries at Gordon. Was

DYSON, EDWARD GEORGE.—*Continued.*

trucker at the Home Paddock, Smeaton. Began to write terrible verse and American humour for Ballarat papers about this time. In Melbourne at the age of nineteen, at work in a factory, writing of evenings for local weeklies and sending vagrant pars. to *The Bulletin*. Became sub-editor of *Life*, a Melbourne society paper, shortly afterwards. Since then occupied as journalist—contributing as a free-lance to *The Bulletin*, *Punch*, *Age*, *Argus*, *Leader*, etc. Started paper, *The Ant*, in 1890—disaster! Publications: *Rhymes from the Mines* (verse), Sydney, 1896; *Below and On Top* (stories and sketches), Melbourne, 1898; *The Gold-Stealers*, a *Story of Waddy*, London, 1901.

EDMOND, JAMES ("Titus Salt," "T.S."); journalist. Born at Glasgow, Scotland, 21st April, 1859. Father Scottish; mother Scottish by one side, French by the other. Married, with three children. Sub-editor of *The Bulletin*. Publication: *A Policy for the Commonwealth*, Sydney, 1900.

ELMES, FRANCES FITZGERALD ("S.O.S.," "A. Leo Watts," "Mars"); journalist. Born Somersetshire, Eng., 23rd April, 1867; father Irish, mother English. Unmarried.

EVISON, JOSEPH SPENCE ("Ivo," "Ovi," "Wellington Watchman," "Taiping," "Phiz," etc.); journalist. Born Sunderland, Eng., 3rd June, 1841; of English parentage. Married. "Educated (?) at Dame's School, Titchfield, Hants., and 'finished' at Royal Naval School, Newcross, Eng. Intended for Royal Navy, but joined Duncan Dunbar's merchant service as midshipman when thirteen and a-half years old. Made several voyages to China and India; remained some years in former country, where saw a lot of the Taiping rebellion and Gordon's force. Returned to England; subsequently went to India, thence to Abyssinia during the campaign, returning to India at finish thereof. Have seen a good deal of the world and of sailorising; commanded most civilised and uncivilised rigs, and once helped to steal a gunboat. Also owned a junk, which was taken by Chinese pirates near Chusan, China—managed to swim ashore. Have seen some regular and some irregular soldiering, greatly to advantage of latter. Went to Maoriland twenty years ago, and have been in Australasia ever since, becoming tamed and domesticated by means of lecturing and journalism—specially the latter, which is very taming. General impression of life is that it is hard. But the good times I have had! Oh, the good times!" Publications: *Murder Will Out*, Wellington, 1889; *Parliamentary Portraits*, Christchurch, 1892-4.

FAVENC, ERNEST ("Dramingo," "Delcomyn"); literary writer. Born at London, Eng., 21st October, 1845; of English parentage. Married, with one child. "Went to the Upper Burdekin district of North Queensland in 1865; working on cattle stations, and droving, until 1878. In charge of *The Queenslander* exploring expedition from Blackall, Q., to Port Darwin, N.T., 1878-1879. In 1882-83-84, examined rivers running into the Gulf of

FAVENC, ERNEST.—*Continued*,

Carpentaria in the Northern Territory of S.A. Traced Macarthur River from head to salt water. Found track from Nicholson River to N.T. tableland. In 1888, examined head waters of Ashburton and Gascoyne Rivers in W.A. and found new tributaries of these rivers." Publications : *The History of Australian Exploration*, London and Sydney, 1888; *The Last of Six: Tales of the Austral Tropics*, Sydney, 1893, (as *Tales of the Austral Tropics*) London, 1894; *The Secret of the Australian Desert*, London, 1896; *The Moccasins of Silence*, Sydney, 1896; *Marooned in Australia*, London, 1897; *My Only Murder (and other tales from The Bulletin)*, Sydney, 1898. Two serial stories contributed to *The Queenslander* are *Jack Essingham* and *Lost in the Winning* (not published in book form).

FLETCHER, HENRY; orchardist and literary writer. Born at London, Eng., 23rd August, 1856; of British parentage. Married, with five children. Publication : *The North Shore Mystery* (novel), Sydney, 1899.

LAWSON, HENRY ARCHIBALD ("Joe Swallow"); literary writer. Born on the Weddin Mountain diggings, near Grenfell, N.S.W., 17th June, 1869. His father was Peter Hertzberg Larsen, a Norwegian; his mother Louisa Albury (of English yeoman stock), a native of Guntawang, near Mudgee, N.S.W. (Thus Lawson's name is really Larsen; but the Anglicised form appears to have been nearly always used by his father, who is "Peter Larsen" in his marriage certificate, but "Peter Archibald Lawson" in his son's birth certificate. The "Archibald" results from a misunderstanding on the part of the minister who officiated at the christening, and who, being rather deaf, mistook "Hertzberg" for "Archibald," and sent the young Australian writer through the world with an English instead of a Norse middle-name—much to his father's disgust.) Peter Larsen was the son of a Norsk teacher of navigation, and a clever man with brain and hand. Henry Lawson's mother is well-known in Sydney as speaker and writer, and is proprietress of the woman's paper *Dawn*. At the time of Lawson's birth his father was a miner, but when he was a few months old his parents took a farm at Wilbertree, near Mudgee, N.S.W. His father gradually drifted into contracting, and in helping him and assisting on the farm Lawson made acquaintance with the bush life round his home. At 17 he came with his mother to Sydney, where he learnt the trade of coach-painter. His first published composition was "The Song of the Republic," verses contributed to *The Bulletin* in 1887, and since then his pen has rarely been idle. In '89 he went to Albany, W.A., following his trade. Returned to Sydney, and helped on a radical weekly, *The Republican*. In '90-91 was on the staff of *The Boomerang*, Brisbane. In '92 travelled from Bourke to the Queensland border, 'swagging it' as bush labourer for six months. In '93 went to Maoriland; occupied as sawmill labourer and telegraph lineman. Returned to Sydney; was for a month on staff of *The Daily Worker*, and for a little longer supernumerary clerk in N.S.W. Govt. service. Again

LAWSON, HENRY ARCHIBALD.—*Continued.*

to Westralia (Perth), painting. To Maoriland as school-teacher. Returned to Sydney, and left for London in 1900. Married; with two children. Publications: *Short Stories in Prose and Verse*, Sydney, 1894; *In the Days when the World was Wide and other Verses*, Sydney, 1896; *While the Billy Boils* (literary sketches), Sydney, 1896; *On the Track; and Over the Sliprails*, Sydney, 1900; *Verses, Popular and Humorous*, Sydney, 1900; *The Country I Come From* (prose reprint), London, 1901.

LIGHT, MAUD ("M.L."); teacher of kindergarten. Born at Karaka Hill, Thames goldfield, M.L., 8th May, 1870; of English parentage. Unmarried. Educated in Sydney. "First attempt to write—beginning of story on half-sheet of writing paper—member of family chased me upstairs and downstairs for it and read *every word*—thus is justice meted out! This effected temporary cure. Next article in Melbourne, when *The Age* offered a prize. All I remember is sneaking to the city along the St. Kilda road. *The Age* had n't that discrimination which usually accompanies its —er—Age; and the MS. was returned. Treasured the wrapper, wondering if it might have been addressed by 'The Vagabond.' Tried school-teaching and learning at same time. 'Went on the land'—woman's way; that is, learnt typewriting and shorthand, and—answered advertisements. All the paper in *The Bulletin* office would not suffice to express the hilarity of your humble servant on finding a concoction of her own in the Xmas number of 1899. There's only one thing better—getting the cheque for it."

MACK, MARIE LOUISE; literary writer. Born at Hobart, Tasmania, 10th October, 1871; father German, mother from N. Ireland. Married. Educated in Sydney; became teacher, and later (for three years) journalist on *The Bulletin* staff,—till leaving for London in 1901. Publications: *The World is Round*, London, 1896; *Teens*, Sydney, 1897; *Girls Together*, Sydney, 1898; *Dreams in Flower*, Sydney, 1901.

M'CAY, ADAM CAIRNS ("Wyvis," "The Pagan"); schoolmaster. Born Castlemaine, Vic., 27th December, 1874. Of Australian race; father from N. Ireland; mother English. Married, with one child. "Educated at Castlemaine and Melbourne University; graduated 1894; since 1895 running Grammar School in Castlemaine. (Prospectus on application.)"

MILLINGTON, JOSEPH FREDERIC. Born at Liverpool, Eng., 24th March, 1865; of English parentage. Married, with two children. "Educated at Elizabeth College, Guernsey, and afterwards at Wolverhampton Grammar School. Articled to the law; commenced business as solicitor in London. Came to Australia in 1895; went prospecting and gained bush experience. In Maoriland for a year; then returned to Australia and engaged in journalism. In Brisbane started and owned a war newspaper (1900) which ran one month."

MONTGOMERY, ALEXANDER ESME DE LORGES ("Montalex," "Sardonyx," "Heretic"); journalist. Married, with one child. "Born 1847, near historic Londonderry. Father, of French stock, originally Scottish. Mother, of an Anglo-Irish 'Plantation' family, but maternal grandmother Spanish. Montgomery was intended for the Diplomatic Service. Didn't relish the prospect, so went to sea 'on his own.' Visited numerous parts of the world, and remained 'a rolling stone' till '70 found him in Melbourne. Was several years on the Melbourne press; then went to Singapore, and drifted gradually down the Malay Archipelago. Arrived in Sydney from Java in '84. Was some time on *The Evening News*, then bushed it for a couple of years with surveyors' parties. Returning to Sydney, was on *The Echo* till its death. Then became a frequent *Bulletin* contributor, and, finally, a member of the staff." Publications: *Five-Skull Island and other Tales of the Malay Archipelago*, Melbourne, 1897; *The Sword of a Sin*, Melbourne, 1898.

NORRIS, FRANK MARRYAT; agent, newspaper correspondent. etc. Born Charmouth, Devonshire, Eng., 18th April, 1861; of English parentage (mother the daughter of Captain Marryat, the novelist). Married. "Educated on board training ship *Conway* in England. Failing to pass examination for Royal Navy, entered Newcastle Marine. Served some years before mast and as third mate."

PATERSON, ANDREW BARTON ("The Banjo"); solicitor. Born at Narrambla, near Molong, N.S.W., 17th February, 1864; father Scottish, mother Australian. Unmarried. Publication: *The Man from Snowy River, and Other Verses*, Sydney, 1895.

POYNTON, JOSEPH JAMES ("Dargo"); railway clerk. Born Illabarook, Vic., 7th May, 1870. Of Australian race; father English, mother from N. Ireland. Unmarried.

QUINN, RODERIC JOSEPH; literary writer. Born at Sydney, 28th November, 1869; of Irish parentage. Unmarried. Educated in Sydney till 16; studied law irregularly for three years, then became State school teacher in charge of provisional school at Milbrulong, N.S.W. Riverina district, for a few months. Since resident in Sydney. Publications: *Mostyn Stayne* (romance) Melbourne, 1897; *The Hidden Tide* (verse), Sydney, 1899; *The Circling Hearths* (verse), Sydney, 1901.

ROLLETT, FREDERICK ("Warrigal," "Mahara," "Mr. Simple," "F.R.," "The Wake"); journalist. Born at Thorne, Yorkshire, Eng., 22nd August, 1861. Of English Saxon and Norman race, yeoman class. Unmarried. "Educated at Brook's Grammar School, Thorne; reader of romance and adventure, eager for travel; wrote bushels of poetry never sent for publication. Left school at eighteen; travelled in Northern Sweden, Russian Finland, and India; returned to England, but could n't settle down. Came to Australia and went gold-mining and opal-hunting; was at Mount Browne in 1880-81. Knocked about Australia for three

ROLLETT, FREDERICK.—*Continued.*

years; crossed to Maoriland, and have been there (with an interlude at Mildura) ever since—mostly engaged in journalism. Went to Samoa as war correspondent for the *Auckland Herald*. Life has been too physically active for mental effort, but have gathered immense stores of material for use some day." President of the New Zealand Literary and Historical Association, 1901.

SORENSEN, EDWARD SYLVESTER ("Werrimee"). Born near Casino, N.S.W., 24th September, 1869; father Norse, mother (Australian) of Irish parentage. Married, with one child. "Was cowboy on Wooroowoolgen, N.S.W., at eight. Left home at nine to live with farmer at Tomki, N.S.W.; attended Greenridge Public School between corn-planting and corn-pulling time—if there was no chipping to do. All hoe work. (Husking till 12 o'clock at night). At 14, apprenticed to a carpenter, Casino, served two years; 16, stockriding on Wooroowoolgen; 18-19, farming and dairying on Clarence River; 20, on a selection, Myrtle Creek, N.S.W., building, fencing, stockriding, bullock-driving; 21-23, driving milk-cart in Casino, and gardening between times; 24, droving; 25, head man, Tomki butter factory; 1895, came to Sydney, thence to Brisbane, and thence 'humped bluey' over hundreds of miles of Queensland bush. Last two months droving. 1896, droving, gold-digging, rouseabouting. 1897-99, general handy man Stony Desert stations, shearing, wool-classing, engine-driving, carpentering, painting, boundary-riding, book-keeping. 1900-1, publican, Tibooburra, N.S.W. 1901, principally travelling South Australia, Victoria and N.S.W."

SOUTER, CHARLES HENRY ("Nil"); doctor of medicine. Born at Aberdeen, Scotland, 11th October, 1864; father English, mother Scottish. "Childhood passed in Aberdeen, Birmingham, and London. Left school at 14, and came with family to Australia. (There was not then visible any glimmering of the burst of poetical fire which has since rent my being.) Voyaged to this land per full-rigged ship *City of Corinth*, to Sydney direct with general cargo; 100 days out. Then three years wild freedom (I had passed the College of Surgeons' prelim. before leaving England) with a horse, a revolver, and a kangaroo dog, etc., on the head waters of the Castlereagh. A gorgeous and halcyon period indeed. In 1882 went to the Grahnit Ceety to start medicine. Came out with a degree and a wife in 1887; then followed three years in the Never-Never in charge of a hospital. A daughter born and a wife lost;—restlessness;—ship's surgeon to China ports and back; and now for ten years lodge surgeon and J.P. in South Australia. Again a husband and father; "dropping into poetry" like Wegg—and occasionally into prose."

WATSON, JOHN REAY; clerk, Born at Tinonee, N.S.W., 23rd May, 1872; of Scottish parentage. Unmarried. Publications: *In a Man's Mind*, London, 1896; *An Earthly Fulfilment*, London, 1899.

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